

NEW

EPISTLES

FROM

OLD LANDS

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

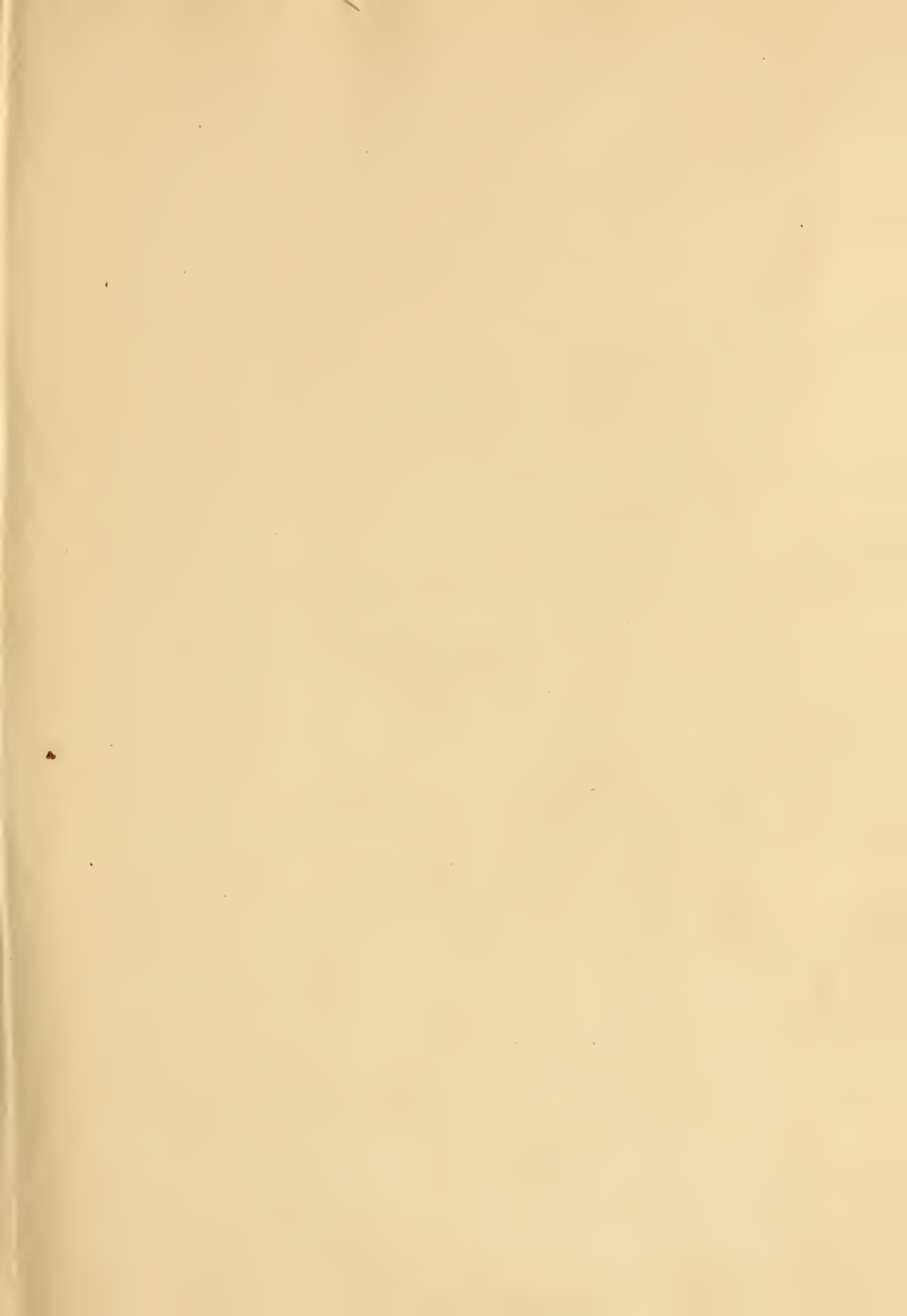
Chap.

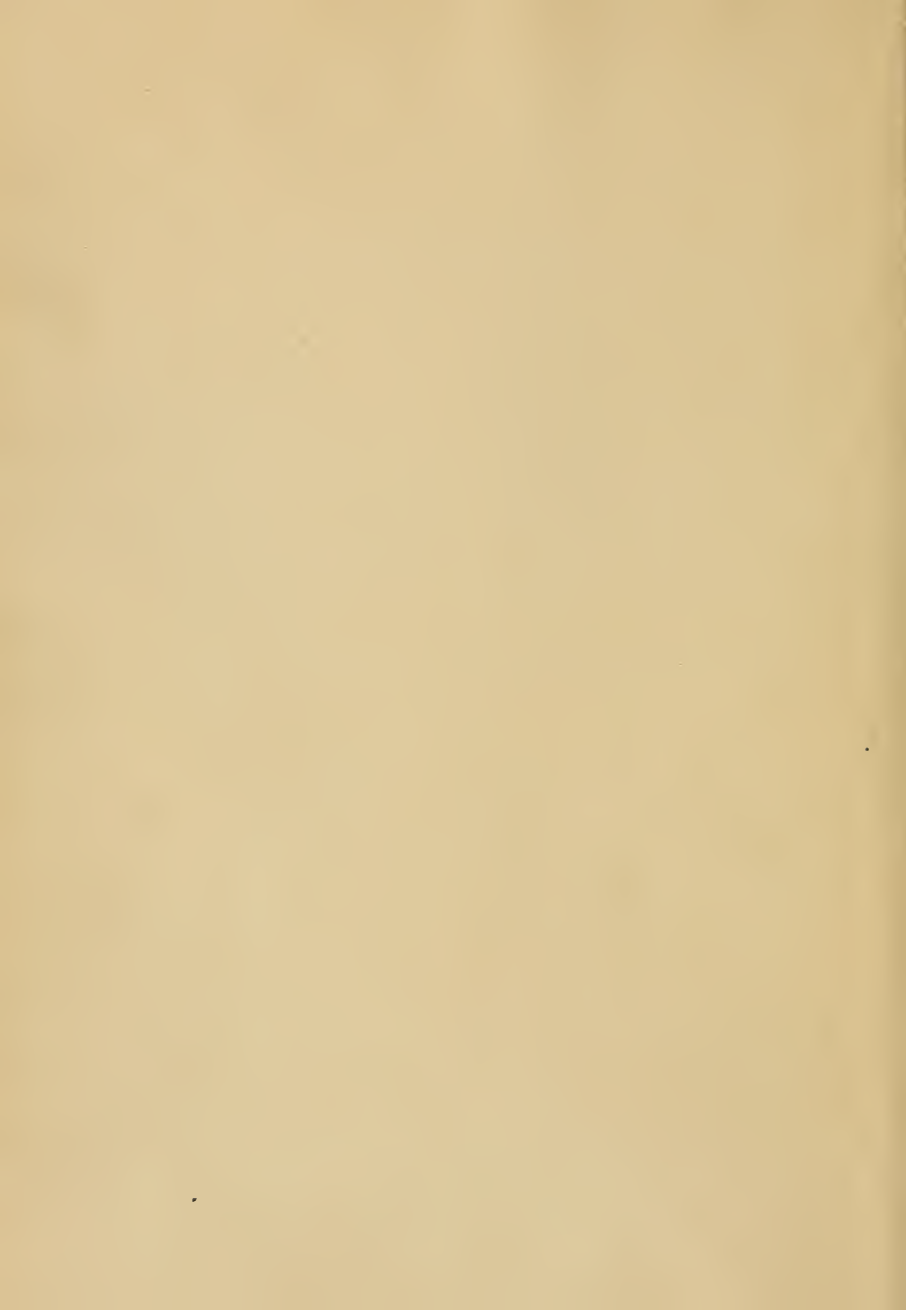
~~BX~~ Copyright No. 9178

Shelf

G7N4

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.





NEW EPISTLES FROM OLD LANDS.

BOOKS BY
REV. DAVID GREGG



New Epistles from Old Lands.

Suggested by a tour of the Holy Land. 12mo. 366
pages. Illustrated. Cloth, \$1.50.

Makers of the American Republic.

Historical Studies of Colonial Times. 12mo. 405
pages. Cloth, \$1.50.

Our Best Moods. A series of discourses.

12mo. 362 pages. Frontispiece Portrait. Cloth, \$1.25.

Facts that Call for Faith.

Masterly appeals on the great themes of eternal life.
12mo. 314 pages. Cloth, \$1.00.

**The Heaven Life; or, Stimulus for Two
Worlds.**

12mo. 168 pages. Cloth, 75 cents.

**The Things of Northfield; and Other
Things which should be in every Church.**

12mo. 144 pages. Cloth, 50 cents.

Ideal Young Men and Women. Addresses
to Young People.

12mo. 114 pages. Cloth, 50 cents.

**Testimony of the Land to the Book; or,
the Evidential Value of Palestine.**

12mo. Leatherette, 35 cents.

E. B. TREAT & CO., 241-243 W. 23d St., N.Y.



THE PROMISED LAND, VIEWED FROM MOUNT NEBO.

NEW EPISTLES *from* OLD LANDS

BY

DAVID GREGG

Pastor Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church, Brooklyn.

AUTHOR OF

"TESTIMONY OF THE LAND TO THE BOOK," "OUR BEST MOODS,"
"MAKERS OF THE AMERICAN REPUBLIC," "FACTS THAT CALL
FOR FAITH," "IDEAL YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN," ETC.

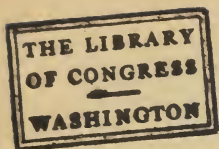
*Written in the light of modern researches, based upon the
Author's recent travels in the East.*

ILLUSTRATED

NEW YORK
E. B. TREAT & COMPANY

241-243 WEST 23D STREET

1900



TWO COPIES RECEIVED,

Library of Congress,
Office of the

DEC 2 - 1899

Register of Copyrights.

BX 9178
G7N4

48594

COPYRIGHT

By E. B. TREAT & COMPANY,

1899.

SECOND COPY,

78497
Dec. 2 '99.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE.

THE title of this volume is happily taken from that of its first chapter, which is a sermon of salutations from some of the ancient churches of the East, which the author delivered to his own people on his return from a six months' journey in Bible lands. The conception was so beautiful and impressive that it was very naturally followed by a series of other sermons which are here gathered, under the same general title. They were all suggested and illustrated by different scenes in the author's journeyings.

It will be a new impression to many as they see how fully the doctrines of the Bible are taught by picture and incident, by landscape and historic memorial. The contrast of the fertile plain of Sharon with the stony wilderness of Judea, the suggestive "leaving of her waterpot" by the woman who has learned that Christ has the living water, the "herdsman of Tekoa" whose conception of practical everyday righteousness makes him the prophet Amos, the idyllic story of Ruth the gleaner in the fields of Bethlehem, Mount Carmel and its tragic companion of Baal and

Jehovah, the psalm-country of David and the reverent praises sung in old-time churches, the sacred mountains and lofty and far-reaching views of the kingdom of God—each of these has its message to the devout heart, and a less eloquent interpreter than our author might find in the “New Epistles from Old Lands,” other epistles in the same correspondence so pleasantly begun.

Dr. Gregg has unusual skill in natural and vivid description of scenes worth remembering, while not forgetting to bring out a clear and strong religious lesson from what he describes, and his sermons are not only bright and interesting, but among the most practical and wholesome. As here presented they will be a pleasant reminder to those who heard them, and will profitably reach a much larger number who will find in them new appreciation and love of the Bible and new spiritual insight and strength.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER.	PAGE.
I.—NEW EPISTLES FROM OLD LANDS,	17
II.—WHAT GOD IS TO HIS PEOPLE, AND WHAT HE IS NOT,	47
III.—THE THINGS WE SHOULD LEAVE FOR CHRIST	75
IV.—THE PLUMBLINE : OR, THE HERDSMEN OF TEKOA	101
V.—WHY NOT THE MEN AS WELL AS THE WOMEN? OR, A FAMILY FROM THE SEASHORE OF GALL- LEE,	127
VI.—MOUNT EBAL. A VOICE OF GOD,	157
VII.—A HEBREW IDYL, OR, A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF RUTH,	185
VIII.—THE HOSANNA-DAY IN THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST,	211
IX.—MOUNT CARMEL, OR, THE RELIGION OF GOD PUT TO THE TEST AND FOUND TRUE,	237
X.—SOUL-SIGHT, OR, A STORY OF JERICHO,	261
XI.—THE SONGS OF THE PSALM-COUNTRY,	289
XII.—THE PROPHETS OF THE HOLY LAND,	317
XIII.—THE SACRED HEIGHTS OF PALESTINE, OR, THE USES OF THE MOUNTAINS,	341



LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

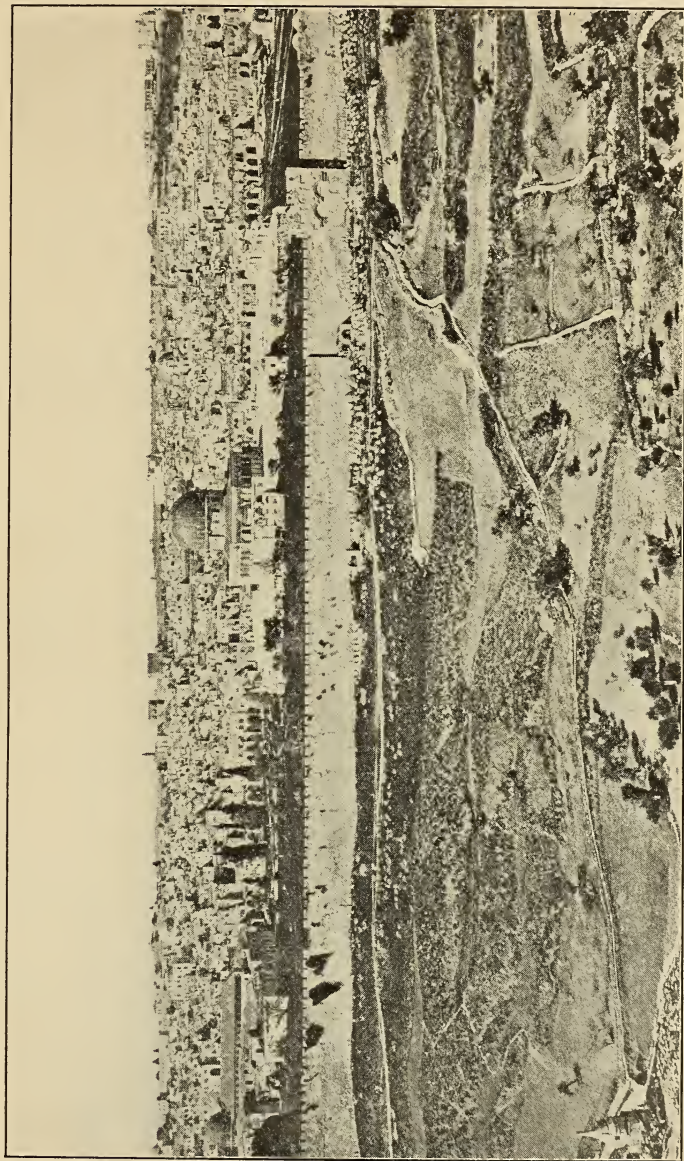
THE PROMISED LAND, VIEWED FROM MOUNT NEBO,	<i>Frontispiece.</i>
	PAGE
JERUSALEM FROM THE MOUNT OF OLIVES, . . .	16
THE WILDERNESS OF JUDEA,	46
THE RIVER ABANA FLOWING THROUGH DAMAS- CUS,	54
THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA WITH THE WATER- POT,	74
THE PROPHETS AMOS AND NAHUM, FROM THE FRIEZE, BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY, . . .	100
THE SEA OF GALILEE WITH THE JORDAN OUTLET.	126
THE SEA OF GALILEE—FISHING SCENE, . . .	142
MOUNT EBAL AND NABLUS (SHECHEM), . . .	156
IN THE HARVEST FIELD OF BOAZ,	184
ROAD LEADING TO JERUSALEM OVER MOUNT OF OLIVES TO GETHSEMANE,	210
MOUNT CARMEL AND THE SEA,	236
THE SAMARITAN INN ON THE WAY TO JERICHO,	260
MOUNT LEBANON AND ITS SURVIVING CEDARS, .	288
GROUP OF PROPHETS, FROM THE FRIEZE, BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY,	316
MOUNT HERMON WITH ITS PERPETUAL SNOW, .	340



PRELUDE.

WHEN my people generously granted me a six months' absence for the purpose of educational and religious travel, I had no sooner set sail than I was confronted with the question: What will you preach about the first Sabbath after your return? I knew that a vast audience would be present, and that the coming home would be as great an event as the going away was. The people would be filled with interest and expectation. The first service after my return would be an occasion. A voice within said: "Keep that day in mind, plan for it, work for it, get ready for it!" This plan suddenly came to me, and it seemed like an inspiration: Gather salutations from the churches of Christ abroad, and bring these to your people. Make the first service after your return "A Salutation Service." This plan I carried out, and the result is this present sermon. Some of the churches which I visited not only sent salutations, but offered special public prayer for Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church. My church, on my return, reciprocated this brotherly conduct by holding a special prayer service to commend to God these churches across the sea.

DAVID GREGG.



JERUSALEM FROM THE MOUNT OF OLIVES.



NEW EPISTLES FROM OLD LANDS

I.

NEW EPISTLES FROM OLD LANDS.

“The churches of Christ salute you.”—ROM. xvi. 16.

I DENOMINATE this service “A Salutation Service,” because, when travelling in foreign lands, I was charged, by many churches and by many disciples of Jesus, to bring you their loving greetings. Some of these greetings I bring in written form. These epistles which I bring are voices from across the sea, and they enable the churches and friends there to speak for themselves and give their own messages of good-will.

The most interesting things which I saw abroad were the churches of Jesus Christ. As I travelled from continent to continent, their salute was my greatest joy. When I stepped into new territory, it was for them that I first searched. And this is the glad fact which I have to tell you to-day: “In all my journeyings I was never able to get out of sight of the Church of Jesus Christ. I found Christ’s Church everywhere. I found it in

the land of Calvin, and of Knox, and of Wesley, and of Luther, and of Zwingli, and of Savonarola, and of d'Aubigné. I found it in the land of the Pharaohs, and in the land of Naaman, and in the land of the Nazarene. I found it in the valley of the Jordan, on the slopes of Lebanon, and on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. I found it in Jerusalem, and in Bethlehem, and in Nazareth. I found it in places I least expected to find it.

Take Nazareth, for example. My experience there was striking. Before I left for the Orient I said to myself, "There is one place in Palestine in which I greatly desire to preach, and that place is Nazareth." I wished to preach there a sermon which I had written upon the unbelief of Nazareth. That was the only manuscript sermon which I took with me into the Orient. When I reached Cairo, the brethren of Egypt compelled me to preach there and I had to take my only sermon. Alas for my Nazareth plan! I could not repeat my one sermon there, for the party I travelled with heard it in Cairo. But the whole ordering was of the Lord. Nazareth has changed. The city, which once rushed Jesus to the brow of its hill to hurl Him headlong to death, to-day honors Jesus. The churches of Jesus loom up there around the carpenter shop where Jesus once worked as the despised and rejected of men. Outside of lands commonly known as Christendom, Nazareth is the most Christian city that I visited in all my tour.

This was my Sabbath Day's experience in Nazareth: In the morning I was wakened by the sweet chimes of Sabbath bells rung in the belfries of the Greek and Episcopal churches in different parts of the city. At eleven o'clock I attended divine service in the White Tent of our camp, which stood by the side of the noted well called after the mother of Jesus. In the early afternoon I walked through the streets of the city and found every street wrapped in sabbatic stillness. Not a shop was open, not a sign of traffic was visible. Greater New York has no such Sabbath keeping as that. London, in Christian England, has no such Sabbath keeping as that. On one street I found a branch of the British Bible Society. On another street a Christian dispensary. On another, a Christian hospital. On another, a Sabbath-school crowded to the door, and there I heard the Nazarene children sing, in Arabic, the very hymns I have heard our Brooklyn children sing, and sing them to the same tunes. On another street I found worshippers going to and coming from an open church. In the latter part of the afternoon, by special invitation, I attended a Christian wedding in the Greek church. I had previously visited the bride and had made her a wedding present in the shape of a gold coin; and hence I occupied the chief seat of honor on that occasion. As the day passed into twilight the church bells rang again and chimed the Sabbath evening vespers.

But the Sabbath was not over in Nazareth. As the darkness settled over the historic hills of Christ's old home, suddenly I saw a lighted cross shine out in the air. I followed it, curious to know why it was there, and who put it there. It lured me to a Christian home. It was a window built into the gable of a Nazarene's house. The man was a Christian, and built this cross into his house, that every time he lighted the lights of his home the symbol of his faith might shine out into the darkness and become his public testimony and his public declaration that Christ crucified is the only hope for his fellow-townsmen. When the time for our evening service in our White Tent drew near, and I was getting ready to preach, I heard a Christian hymn sounding down the hill over the housetops. It was the hymn, "He is Risen," and it was sung to the old familiar tune. I followed the sound full of wonder, asking the question, Who can these sweet singers be? As the result of my search, I found one of the most charming home-scenes I ever saw—a young husband and wife and two fair children. The children nestled together in their crib, and the parents were crooning them to sleep with the hymn of the Christ of Nazareth. These parents had found Christ in the English Church mission of their city, and could both speak English. I invited them to come to our tent service, but they insisted that our whole camp should come to the

church in their house. This we did, and I preached to them and to our camp and to the neighbors hastily gathered in, an extempore sermon which I had gathered from the fields of the Holy Land, which a great scholar has called "The Fifth Gospel."

I found the Church of Jesus Christ everywhere, and in places where I least expected to find it. The Church is not local, it is universal.

From what I saw abroad, I am convinced of two things. The first is this: The Church of Christ has been the one great power of the past which has enriched and ennobled and uplifted the world. The second thing is this: If the world in the future is to have an ennobling and a purifying and uplifting power, the Church must be that power.

I saw the world's great works of art and painting and sculpture, and these led me to the Church. It was the Church that inspired them, and fostered them, and brought them down to posterity. The great ambition of the geniuses of the past was to so sculpture a piece of marble, so paint a canvas, so produce a musical composition, so rear a vast structure that these masterpieces of theirs might be considered worthy of the acceptance and use of the Church. The great canvasses in the Vatican at Rome, and in the Pitti Palace at Florence, are churchly canvasses. If the Church of Christ had never existed, these would never have been called into being. And what shall I say of

the great cathedrals of the world, in most of which I worshipped! These are religion in stone; these are the voices of architecture crying, "Hosanna to the Son of David." Blot out the Church of Christ from the past of the world, and you leave little reason why any man to-day should travel.

I had large fellowship with the churches of Christ while absent from you, and here is a budget of letters from these churches, the tangible evidence of that fellowship.

In presenting these salutations I wish you to note this—that all continents of earth are gathered this morning within the four walls of this temple. They are here by representation. This budget of letters is the world in miniature. If we speak of the world as existing in cities: Jerusalem, and Athens, and Rome, and Cairo, and Beyrout, and London, and Edinburgh are here. If we speak of the world as existing in countries: Judea, and Greece, and Italy, and Egypt, and England, and Scotland are here. If we speak of the world as existing in continents, Europe and Asia and Africa are here. If we speak of the world as existing in the Christian denominations of the Church: Episcopalians, and Baptists, and Methodists, and Presbyterians, and Congregationalists are here.

I shall take up these letters geographically, beginning at Jerusalem.

A letter from Jerusalem! That sounds apos-

tolic. That is something like the Bible. With Jerusalem back of it, any letter written in the name of Jesus ought to be an inspiration. The city itself is eloquent. It is the cradle of Christianity. Its voice is holy. On Mount Zion there is but one voice heard and that voice declares that the holy hill is full of God, "who was, and is, and is to come." Jerusalem has always been the delight of the muse of history. It is the theatre where God, in the person of His son, acted out the great drama of redemption. It is the city of the prophets, and of the Psalmist, and of the temple, and of the cross, and of the Resurrection, and of Pentecost. The city has struck deep into the life of humanity. But has it no rôle to play in coming events? Has it no future? If not, what mean those gatherings which are being held in New York, and in London, and in Basle, with their plans for the purchase of Palestine as a home for the Jews? I found the City of Jerusalem a different city from what it was twenty years ago. Jerusalem is again the city of the Jews. It has sixty thousand of a population, and forty thousand of these are the seed of Abraham. Twenty years ago there was only a handful of Jews in the Holy City. Old Testament prophecy is being fulfilled before our very eyes: "Ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord." "I will take you, one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion."

I spent two Sabbaths in Jerusalem. The first was spent in prayer and in singing the songs of the cross on the supposed site of Calvary. A converted Jewish rabbi directed our footsteps that day. On the second Sabbath I preached in the upper-room of the American consulate, and presided over the administration of the Lord's Supper. The American and British consuls, with their families, were there, and some sixty others.

My introduction to the Lord's work in the Holy City was unique. It was on this wise: Fifteen minutes after I passed through the Joppa Gate, I was accosted by a little red-headed Jewish boot-black, "Black your boots, sir." I asked him who taught him to speak English. He replied, "I was taught in the Jewish Christian school." "Take me to that school and I will give the price of a shine." He led me along the street over which Christ carried the cross, then turned in the direction of the temple, and then into the Mission House. Two large schools were in full operation. The work is carried on by the Church Missionary Society of England. Most of the Christian work in Palestine is carried on by this society. There is one notable exception, however; I mean the work at Tiberias which I visited when sailing the Lake of Galilee. The Tiberias work was started by the saintly McCheyne and Bonar of the Free Church of Scotland. I had the good fortune to meet all the workers of Palestine at a reception

given by the British consul in his home, and I learned that night that the Prayer Book has been translated into Hebrew, also the New Testament; and that at every Easter in Jerusalem four thousand copies of the Bible are distributed to the pilgrims who crowd the city. As a result of my fellowship with these brethren of Judea, I bring this letter from the head of the Jewish work in Jerusalem.

FROM THE CHURCH AT JERUSALEM.

MY DEAR BROTHER: I send you greetings and salaams from myself and our Hebrew-Christian brethren in Jerusalem. I greatly enjoyed my conversation with you at the English consulate in this city. Thank God, the work here has greatly prospered now for more than sixty years, for, though we have not a large community here, on account of want of business and trade, yet we are represented in all parts of the world, and notably in New York.

As might be expected, we have much opposition here from the Jews, and just lately there has been an outbreak of violence toward those who come to us, and an endeavor, by physical force, to prevent the poor from taking even medicines from us. But it is now broken down for a time. The Gospel goes on winning its way among the people, as in olden days, the power of the Holy Ghost being manifested in the conversion of souls. We are working on in the city where our Lord was crucified by Jews and Gentiles, and we believe that the way is being prepared for the coming of Him who shall make it "the City of the Great King."

We send our greetings to your great church, remembering that we have been privileged to have visits from its two notable pastors, Dr. Cuyler and yourself.

and while we pray for blessings upon you all, we ask that we, too, may be remembered in your prayers, that a great ingathering of Jews may take place in the City of Zion, and that we may be faithful witnesses for Him "till he come." "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee."

I am yours, in the Lord Jesus,

A. HASTINGS KELK,

Minister of Christ Church, Mount Zion, Jerusalem.

My second letter is a voice from Athens.

Athens! There is a thrill in the very name. It is the embodiment of antiquity. It is one of that marvellous trinity of cities which has made human history great. The full trinity is Jerusalem, Athens, Rome. Athens follows Jerusalem in the order of time, and serves it by creating a universal language for Jerusalem's universal Gospel; but it antedates Rome in the order of time and serves it by preparing the world for Rome's coming. In history Athens is set forth as Rome's schoolmaster. Jerusalem, Athens, Rome—these three cities are linked together in the cause of civilization; but especially are they linked together in the cause of the Gospel. This is the order of service: Jerusalem originates and formulates the Gospel, it gives the world the cross. Athens, the head of Greece, voices the Gospel in its universal language, the Greek language, the most beautiful of all languages of the race, and passes it round the world in fitly spoken words,

which the divine proverb says are "like apples of gold in baskets of silver." Rome opens highways to the ends of the earth for the golden-worded thoughts of Jesus, and then throws its universal laws around the standard-bearers of the cross, as they plant the cross in realms far and near. Athens is associated with the greatest greatness of the World. It is the place of great memories. Its air is as full of historical presences as the mellow autumn day is full of sunbeams. It is the place of great names. Here Solon made laws; and Socrates constructed philosophy; and Demosthenes delivered immortal orations; and Aristotle worked out a system of logic; and Plato built his academy; and Sophocles and Euripides constructed their moral and sermonic plays in the theatre of Æschylus. It was here that Phidias and Praxiteles sculptured; and it was here that the famous architects of Greece threw into space the Parthenon, the despair of the architects in all ages. Who can tell what service Athens has rendered to the world through such men as these? As one of our most evangelic scholars has said: "Greek culture is the left arm of God visibly let down into history, just as Christian culture is the right arm of God visibly let down into history." Certain it is, standing on the Acropolis of Athens, that city of magnificent ruins, and looking at the great forms of the past, which are visible to the mind's eye, the Acropolis commands the loftiest intellectual

outlook of this whole globe. But the chief object in Athens to us, who are Christians, is not the Acropolis, with its Parthenon; not Socrates, not Plato, not Aristotle; but Mars Hill, at the foot of the Acropolis, with Paul, the chief of the Apostles, upon it, preaching Christ. Standing within bow-shot of the prison where Socrates was martyred and within bow-shot of the platform where Demosthenes orated, with the grove where Plato had his academy near him; within touch of the Parthenon, with its transfigured splendor; with a city crowded with the statues of false gods at his feet; the temples of Minerva, and Jupiter, and Theseus within the range of his voice, and almost within the very sweep of his gesture, Paul proclaimed the one living and true God to Athens, and declared that it was absurd to think that the God of Heaven and earth should dwell in temples made with human hands. He dwelleth in the fulness of his Godhead bodily in Jesus Christ. Paul preached Jesus Christ to Athens. And was his voice heard, and is Christ known in Athens to-day? By the use of the words of a friend, in speaking of Paul on Mars Hill, I answer the question: "In a sea of temples, its waves toppling with mortal threats above his head, a solitary swimmer, a stranger, a Jew, clings to the assertion that God dwelleth not in temples, and that assertion after 1800 years outrides the hurricane."

I found a Christian church in Athens, and wor-

shipped in it, and partook of the Lord's Supper in it. As if to perpetuate the memory of the greatest event that ever took place there, it is called after the actor in that event; it bears this name: "The Church of St. Paul." The sermon which I heard in St. Paul's Church the Sabbath I was in Athens, strange as it may seem, was nothing other than the elucidation and the enlargement and the completion of Paul's Mars Hill idea. It was Paul's sermon, with the nineteenth century put into it. The Episcopal rector who preached that day wrote this letter to you. I give it in excerpt form only:

FROM THE CHURCH AT ATHENS.

91 RUE TRITI, ATHENS.

The St. Paul's Episcopal Church of Athens, expressing the close communion that should exist among all the members of Christ's Church, however far apart, salutes the Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church, of Brooklyn, N. Y. The holy day on which I write is Whitsun-Day, and commemorates the marvellous outpouring of the Spirit of Pentecost upon the Church of Jerusalem. That is the greatest blessing possible to our Christian churches. Brethren of America, join with us, your brethren in Athens, in seeking the presence and power of the Pentecostal spirit.

Very fraternally yours in Christ,

F. R. ELLIOT.

Now for the message from Cairo.

Cairo was the first place in the Orient which I visited. There for the first time I set foot upon

a land in which Jesus actually had been. That fact thrilled me all the time I was in Egypt. But what saw I in Cairo? The Nile; the footprints of the Pharaohs; yes. The land of Goshen in the distance; the gigantic pyramids; yes. But that which remains with me as greater than all, is what I saw there of the work of Christ as carried on by the United Presbyterian Church of the United States. This is one of the best equipped missions in Christendom and one of the most blest. This Mission is the Church of Egypt. It covers the whole valley of the Nile. I had large fellowship with the brethren during my ten days' stay in the land which is known as the cradle of civilization. I was placed under a holy compulsion by the friends here and compelled to preach for them. Dr. Cuyler was the irresistible argument which they used. He had visited them and had preached for them, and I could not be the successor of Dr. Cuyler, at least in the valley of the Nile, if I refused to preach. I preached the only sermon I had with me, and I am glad I did, for it seems to have satisfied the Egyptians. The report of that sermon went as far as Jerusalem, for, on my return to America a letter from Jerusalem awaited me asking for a copy of the sermon, coupled with a request that a ministerial brother might have permission to preach it there in my name. It was reported in Jerusalem by a young man who was in the audience at Cairo. The Egyptian Church has

won over ten thousand souls to Christ; and it has set four hundred and fifty thousand Arabic Bibles at work for God in that land where Joseph reigned and where the infant Christ was saved from the sword of Herod. These Bibles of which I have spoken were printed for the Egyptian Church by the Presbyterian Publishing House at Beyrout.

This is the Cairo letter:

FROM THE CHURCH AT CAIRO, EGYPT.

The brethren of Cairo, and throughout Egypt, greet with heartiness the brethren of the Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn. "Grace be unto you and peace from him, who was, and is, and is to come, and from the seven spirits which are before his throne." The workers for the Lord in the land which sheltered the infant Jesus have been twice gladdened by the visits of your beloved pastors, both of whom preached for us. Dr. Gregg's sermon was just what we needed; and think of it, the American vice-consul was present to hear it! He has been years among us without attending church. The subject was, "The Guilt and Hurt of Non-Faith." Why does not the great Christian republic send out-and-out Christian men to represent it among the nations who own not our Redeemer?

While we are on this line, suffer us to broaden our thought and give a word of earnest exhortation to Christians who travel. Brethren, bring all of your religion with you when you come to Cairo. Make a covenant with your eyes not to see certain sights and scenes for which Cairo is noted. It is the tourists who pay the bills of iniquity kept up among us. With us the tourist is the heathen's sneer, and they often throw this sneer in our faces. For God's sake help us, when you come among us. The world will never

be won to our faith until Christian missionaries are fortified by Christian tradesmen, Christian consuls, Christian sailors, Christian naval officers, and Christian tourists. We out here belong to the old-fashioned type of believers. We hold to the inerrancy of the Bible. We believe also in the Shorter Catechism and teach it to our children, for without solid doctrine solid work is impossible. We love and cling to the Old-Testament Psalms, and, because they are inspired, sing them, and them only, in worship. As Dr. Gregg said when he was among us: "It is heart-warming to hear the inspired songs of the souls which were first sung in the valley of the Jordan, and which graced the lips of Jesus Himself, echoed to-day with such heartiness in the valley of the Nile." We ask you to join us in the use of these songs of God.

Now that you have suffered a word of exhortation, allow us to speak a word of congratulation. We congratulate you on your pastors. We know Dr. Cuyler as a stanch Princetonian, and we know Dr. Gregg as the son of a stanch Covenanter. We can trust men of these types. We know your zeal for the Lord and honor you for it. We feel strong in your strength though far away from you. Ever expecting much from you, we commend you to God and to the word of His grace.

We have now reached Rome. But allow me to say our letter is not from the Church of Rome (so called). It is a letter from a church in Rome; but a church older than the Church of the Papacy. It is a letter from the Waldensian Church. The story of this Church, which comes straight from the Apostles, is the most moving story in all ecclesiastical literature. This is its story in brief: Missionaries sent from Rome, in the apostolic

days, planted churches in the valleys of the Alps. These became the Waldensian churches. When others yielded to the Roman See, these spurned the yoke of the Church of the Seven Hills, and kept their apostolicity intact. They were never subject to Rome. Rome changed, not they. Rome is the schismatic, not they. Rome was guilty of apostasy, not they. If they are ancient, Rome is new. They are Rome's condemnation. This is the reason Rome has persecuted them, and again and again decreed their extermination. If it had not been that the towering Alps were their fortresses, they would have been speedily crushed; but they were the children of the mountains, and knew the fastnesses thereof and the narrow defiles, through which to escape. The mountains built their granite into them. They drank in glory and manhood and eternal fidelity from the snowy crests and thunder-riven peaks, and from the Alpine sky which was all silver and gold. Once the Roman hierarchy captured this whole nation of God's people. The Roman Pontiff lied to them and broke faith with them and took them by guile. He slew all but three hundred or so. These three hundred he banished. He drove them forth into the cold world penniless. Geneva, the city of Calvin, opened its gates to these exiles and rescued them. But the exiles of the Alps were homesick in Geneva. Out there beyond the lake was Mont Blanc, in its sunset glory, every day calling

them home. Rather than die of homesickness, they planned to return home, or die in the attempt. The story of their return has no parallel for daring and success. How they made the Alps echo with their psalms of thanksgiving to God for bringing them back! Out of this nucleus the Waldensian churches were again grown. Friends from abroad helped them; Cromwell helped them, and so did Felix Neff and General Beckwith. These latter brought themselves and their fortunes to them, and cast in their lot with the Waldenses, and by their wealth gave them temples and gave them schools. These were the men who kept the love of liberty alive in Italy until the day that Garibaldi and Victor Emmanuel championed the cause of liberty and made Italy free. It was they who raised the slogan cry, "A free church in a free state." When Victor Emmanuel bored his way into the city of Rome through the thick walls thereof, and smote into the dust the temporal power of the Pope, the Waldensians were in the front ranks of his army. One of these Waldensian soldiers was a colporteur, and in his knapsack he carried a bundle of Bibles into the Eternal City, and made the day not only a victory for Emmanuel and Garibaldi, but a victory for God's Word. Prior to that, no Bible was allowed in the city of Rome. Since that the Bible has been there as a free Book.

The letter from the Waldensian Church is writ-

ten by Dr. Prochet, a man who once preached in this pulpit, and proved himself an eminent scholar by the way he pleaded the cause of his Church. The salutation of the letter is written in Latin and reads :

FROM THE WALDENSIAN CHURCH AT ROME.

The Waldensian Church which is in the Eternal City salutes the angel and the elders and the brethren of the Church of Lafayette which is in Brooklyn. We have heard of your faith and your zeal, and it seems good to us to send you fraternal greetings. . . . Come over and help us. *Seniores et fratres* of Lafayette Presbyterian Church, the Master has lavished His blessings upon you. He has given you selected servants to teach you the way of life. He has made His vivifying presence felt among you. He has, in a word, given you five talents. May you, when you shall appear in the glorious mansions, be able to say, "Here, Lord, are the five talents which Thou hast given us; they have gained five talents more." That is the wish, that is the ardent prayer offered by the old Apostolic Evangelical Church of the Alps, now working in the Eternal City for the purpose of taking Rome for Christ.

Now for a wholesale postponement! A grand letter from Beyrout! What shall be done with it? The reading of it must be postponed. The letters from old Scotland, one from Dr. Hugh McMillan, the Moderator of the glorious Free Church, the church of Chalmers and Guthrie and Candlish; one from Dr. Alexander Whyte, pastor of the Free St. George's, Edinburgh, the successor of Candlish—what shall be done with these? The

reading of these must be postponed. Letters from England—from Thomas Spurgeon; from F. B. Myer; from Dr. Newman Hall—what shall be done with these? The reading of these must be postponed.*

There is one letter which I cannot postpone, and that is the letter from the Wesley Chapel, London, the church where Wesley himself preached. I worshipped in that church two weeks ago to-day, and found it crowded from floor to ceiling. It will seat about twelve hundred people. The service which filled the church was "The English Harvest Home." It corresponds to our Thanksgiving Day. The church was decorated with fruits and flowers. These were arranged in beautiful designs upon a netting; and the netting was thrown around the pulpit and over the galleries and along the frames of the windows. The sermon, prayers, hymns, closing with the "Hallelujah Chorus," were all of the order of Harvest Home. Oh, how those Wesleyan Methodists did sing! Think of it! Out from this church has gone an influence that has made twenty millions of Christians! They have just spent £12,000 in modifying this chapel, but they have not touched the old pulpit in which Wesley stood. It is exactly the same as when he left it. This church is

* These letters were read at the Friday evening service; and special prayer was offered at this service for the churches which sent the fraternal greetings.

just the church to salute the saints the world over, and in this way testify to the unity of the Church Universal. Everything about this chapel speaks of the unity of the Church. There are ten beautiful marble pillars in it which hold up the galleries, and these are gifts from Christians living in ten different nations of the earth. Besides, the chapel stands right in the midst of the Church's great dead. Back of the pulpit sleeps John Wesley. On his right hand is the grave of Adam Clarke, the great commentator; on his left hand is Jabez Bunting, his famous successor. In the front of the chapel, on the other side of Bun Hill Road, are the graves of John Bunyan, Susannah Wesley, John Owen, Thomas Goodwin, and Isaac Watts; and a few feet beyond this, in another cemetery, rests George Fox, the founder of the Society of Friends. These all sleep in union around the Wesley Chapel. Right from the midst of this holy place, written on Wesley's table, comes this letter of greeting to those who are here this morning:

FROM THE WESLEY CHAPEL, LONDON.

The church of John Wesley in England salutes the church of John Knox in America, as perpetuated by the Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn. Brethren in Christ, it was the genius of our great leader Wesley to give the right hand of fellowship to all who love the Lord Jesus. Inheriting His spirit, we also recognize and love all whom the Mas-

ter recognizes and loves. We ask your sympathies and prayers, and give you ours.

"Wherefore after we heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, we ceased not to give thanks, making mention of you in our prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints; and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, which He wrought in Christ, whom He has given to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His Body, the fulness of Him who filleth all in all."

Such are the salutations which I bring to this beloved church of ours. What is the meaning of these salutations? What are their inculcations? As I look at them, they come to us with the inspiration and the power which belong to watching eyes. They set before us large responsibilities. They magnify the duty of loyalty. They make us think of the oath which we took at the cross. They exalt the Church of Jesus Christ as God's regenerating power in the world. They are voices from across the sea. As talking voices, let me set before you in numerical order the things which they say to us as a congregation. They put these things before us:

I. We are known abroad. It is a pleasant thing to be favorably known.

II. In the Christian churches abroad there are

great expectations in the religious air relative to us. Expectations are inspirations. They are tonic. They are an added force.

III. There is an imperative duty laid upon us to verify the knowledge of us that is abroad, and to realize the expectations entertained for us. This is the point to expand as a fitting conclusion of this Salutation Service. Who has laid this duty upon us? The churches abroad have. Who has laid this duty upon us? Christ, who walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks has, and He is the great Head of the Church.

Can we meet this duty? We can. How? I will tell you. (1) We must look after the power-room of the Church. (2) We must look after the unit of the Church.

What is the power-room of the Church? It is the prayer-room where we meet, each Monday night and each Friday night, to withdraw ourselves from the world, to lay hold on the promises, to dedicate ourselves afresh to God, and to receive afresh the spirit of Pentecost which carries the enduement of power. I believe that our great need as Christians is more separation from the world, more going apart to God to get His infilling. We need more prayer, more of the quiet room. The power-room of the factory is the quiet room of the factory. But out from this quiet room go the many lines of forces which turn the noisy wheels and raise the crashing trip-hammers, which

do the practical work and give results. Out of the prayer-room of the Church comes our power. Who are the spiritual men and women among us? I do not mean the men and women who represent the Church in the circles of fashion, in the gayeties of the social life of the city, but the men and women who represent our Church by leading in helpful prayer in the public conferences of the churches, in the mission causes, in the large gifts to charity, and in public Christian work? They are the prayer-meeting men and women. I cannot explain how prayer works in securing the blessing, but I can assert that it does secure the blessing. I can assert that no great man of the Book and no great Church of the Book ever existed without prayer. Moses was a man of power, but Moses was a man of prayer. Elijah was a man of power, but Elijah was a man of prayer. Jesus was a man of power, but Jesus always took good care of the power-room. He spent whole nights in prayer. The Church of Jerusalem was a Church of power; it gave the Gospel to the world; but the Church of Jerusalem was a Church given to prayer. That Church once spent ten consecutive days in one prayer-service, and what was the result? It received the Pentecostal baptism. I want the Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church, here and now, in this solemn presence, to resolve that from this time on it will be the Church of Jerusalem over again. O God! Thou know-

est the power of Jerusalem's upper-room; make this Church, we pray Thee, a Jerusalem upper-room.

They told me in London, three weeks ago, that on the first day of the great Indian mutiny an English officer, alone in his barracks—for his men had deserted the flag—ordered his bugler to try the effect once more of a call to arms. So out on the still evening air the bugler sent floating his trumpet note, "Come to the colors!" Of all who heard the old familiar note of authority, only one man fell into the usual line and saluted the flag. Christ, the Captain of salvation, has brought me back from afar to this great camp of the army of God, and on this first Sabbath of my return he has commanded me to sound the Gospel trumpet of rally around the cross. I send that call out into the hallowed atmosphere of this Sabbath Day. You hear it. Who will respond? Who will respond? That is the question of the hour, and multitudes are waiting to hear the answer. The churches across the sea are waiting to hear. Who? The grand men and women who have gone up to God out of our midst are waiting to hear. Who? The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Pentecost is waiting to hear. Who? Shall there be only one to answer the bugle call? God forbid. Let us all answer the call! Let every unit in this great Church respond. "Therefore, brethren, seeing we are encompassed about with so great a cloud of wit-

nesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us; and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith."

WHAT GOD IS TO HIS PEOPLE
AND
WHAT HE IS NOT.



THE WILDERNESS OF JUDEA.

II.

WHAT GOD IS TO HIS PEOPLE AND WHAT HE IS NOT.

“Have I been a wilderness unto Israel?”—JER. ii. 31.

“The glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers.”
—ISA. xxxiii. 21.

THIS sermon has a history. It is a product of Palestine. It grew in the land where its text grew. I found it in the wilderness of Judea, not far from the city of Jerusalem. Prior to my visit to the Holy Land I had never been in a wilderness. But on the morning of a bright May-day I started from Jerusalem for a trip through the wilderness thirty miles down to the Jordan valley and the banks of the Dead Sea. I was on my way to Jericho. In this trip I reached the very heart of the wilderness of Judea. It formed a great contrast to what I had seen a few days before, when I rode over the plain of Sharon, which was all abloom with flowers and richly freighted with waving harvests. The centre of the wilderness of Judea is wildness itself. It is pure, unrelieved desolation; it is pastureless; it is lifeless; it is utterly unremunerative; it is devoid of every trace or suggestion of the human. There is not even a black tent of

a swarthy Bedouin there. There are hills there, but they are bald, and smooth, and white, and without a tint of verdure. There are great gorges there, black and yawning, rock-ribbed and stony. There are steep precipices there, which make the tourist shudder as he rides along their slippery edges. There is flying dust there, and, driven by the wind, it sweeps the place in blinding and stifling clouds. There is great heat there, and most of the year the wilderness is like a burning oven. A man out there amid those stony hills is as isolated as a man out in the midst of the great waves of mid-ocean with not a sail in sight. It is the land of silence. The perpetual stillness there is overwhelming and oppressive. The sterile solitudes are so deep and so lonely that they set one talking to his own soul for the sake of company and relief. This is the one place of all the earth for God to talk to a man, and to talk effectively. There is positively nothing to interrupt; nothing to break the attention of man. This is God's auditorium, roofed by a wonderful sky, and grand with the grandeur of vastness. It was out here that Elijah lived and received his messages from God, messages which were straightforward and without ornament, craggy and granite in their substance and form. It was out here that John the Baptist separated himself to God, and here he began to preach the coming of the kingdom. It was out here that Jesus Christ was tempted. On one

side of this wilderness Amos was born, and on another and different side of it Jeremiah was born, and the visions of both of these prophets have the ruggedness of this wilderness in them. They both make the wilderness of Judea talk to Israel concerning God, and concerning God's dealings with His covenant people. It was out here, while I was in the very heart of barrenness and chaos and emptiness, that the text of this morning came to me. "Have I ever been a wilderness to thee?" The question came with such force that it seemed as though I heard an audible voice and as though God Himself spake down from the skies. For a time I rode on in the stillness of the wilderness without saying a single word. I let God talk. I allowed Him to amplify His question. "Have I been a barren God to you? Have you planted your faith in Me, and reaped nothing? Have you cultivated your love toward Me and received no love in return? Has your fellowship with Me yielded you nothing more than these broken, chasmic rocks have yielded the shepherds and the husbandmen of Judea? As your God, am I to you as the things which you see around you—blinding dust, oppressive heat which weakens and makes faint, yawning chasm which affrights and terrifies, perpetual emptiness which disappoints, a mighty field of unfruitful rocks bald and barren, unable to give man the bread of life, able only to hold his bones while they bleach in the sun, and crumble

to atoms, and blow away? Am I only a wilderness to you? You know now what a wilderness is. Answer My question here in the heart of this Judean desert. Answer it to your own soul, answer it to the world, answer it to Me."

How did I deal with God's question? How did I frame my answer? What did I say to God in response? I will tell you. I threw God's question up over the barren hills, to the crested edge of the wilderness, to a little oasis there, where I saw a shepherd feeding his flock in the morning as I started out on my wilderness trip; and an answer to God's question came back from that picturesque scene in the form of the Twenty-third Psalm:

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

Turning that psalm into the song of my soul, I sent it to God as my answer. I threw God's question over to the summit of Mount Moriah, and out from the old Temple of God came floating in the air the words of the Thirty-sixth Psalm:

Thy loving kindness, O Lord, is in the heavens.
Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the skies.
Thy righteousness is like the great mountains.
Thy judgments are a great deep.
O Lord, thou preservest man and beast.
How precious is thy loving kindness, O God!
Therefore the children of men put their trust under
the shadow of thy wings.

They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house.

And thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.

For with thee is the fountain of life.

In thy light shall we see light.

I turned these words also into the song of my soul that day, and sent the Thirty-sixth Psalm to God as my answer.

Mount Nebo was in sight from the spot where I was, so I threw God's question up there to Moses, and back from him came these words of the Ninetieth Psalm :

Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.

I threw God's question over to Mount Zion to the palace of David, the King of Israel, and from his harp of praise came back the One Hundred and Third Psalm, and I made that the song of my soul and sent the One Hundred and Third Psalm to God as my answer. Why should I not use these inspired psalms as my answer? I was in the psalm country, where God's goodness grew these psalms, and they answered the fitness of things. I threw God's question over to Bethlehem, and to Calvary, and to the empty tomb, and to the Mount of Olives, and back came the Gospels, and the eighth chapter of Romans, and the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians, and, by an act of appropriating

faith, I made these mine once more and sent them to God as my answer. I was in the midst of these historic and sacred places, I had seen them all that very day, and why should I not interrogate them for the answer which I knew they held? Summing up my answer into one short sentence, with Israel of old, I said: "Lord, thou hast been as a River of Life unto me." A river of life is the very opposite of a wilderness. Israel of old said: "The glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers."

We see now what God is not. He is not a wilderness to His people. The other question before us is, "What is He?" Our text answers: "He is a River to His people."

Did I see illustrations of the value of the life-giving river while in yonder world of antiquity? I did. And what is remarkable, oftentimes I saw the fertile river-valley and the bleak and blasted wilderness-region coexisting side by side. The striking contrast emphasized to me the word "wilderness" and the word "river." I saw the Nile and the fertile valley which it has made. Egypt is the creature of the Nile. Geographically Egypt is a broad tract of country, but so far as civilization is concerned the real Egypt is the comparatively narrow strip of the valley of the Nile, broadening out below Cairo into the Delta. On each side of the rich valley there is an arid region of rocky and sandy hills, on which scarcely a trace of vegetation

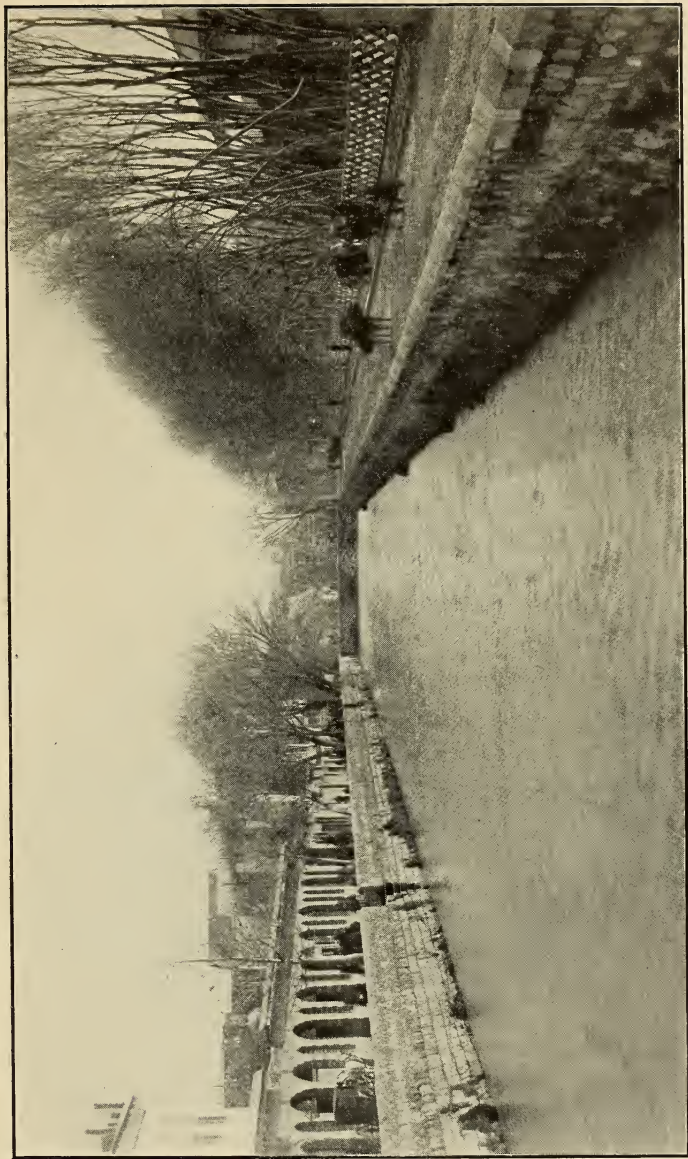
can be seen. The fertile valley is marked off from the desert as cleanly as if the dividing line had been cut by a knife. That desert is a mighty sea of yellow sand which the wind has tossed everywhere into wave shapes. It is crinkled and billowed, just like the ocean. It is out there that the bland Sphinx rears its mighty head, and the gigantic pyramids keep perpetual watch. Take away the Nile, and Egypt in a very short time would lapse into the great African desert. These sands, which are forever dashing up against the Sphinx and the pyramids, would roll over this Eden valley and make it one sea of sand.

What is seen in Egypt is seen in Syria, viz.: fertility and desert side by side. The rich plain of Damascus is surrounded by great sand hills as bleak and as verdureless as the human eye ever rested upon. The contrast sets off the beauty of the city of Damascus. It is a city of gardens, and itself stands in the midst of a vast garden. It is the great White City of the Orient; and its minarets and dome-shaped buildings, all white, give it the appearance of an island of pearls and opals gleaming out of a sea of emerald. You know the characteristics of this noted city. It is noted for its great antiquity and astonishing vitality. It is the oldest city of the world. It antedates Abraham. Eliezer, Abraham's servant, was from Damascus.

It has had vitality to live through millenniums.

Babylon is a ruin, Nineveh is a ruin, but Damascus still stands and shows no sign of decay. Rome is called the Eternal City, but Damascus is twice the age of Rome. Its history goes back to the world's beginning and bids fair to go on to the world's end. It is noted for its great beauty. It is called the Paradise of the East. It got this name from the story of Mohammed. It is related of him that, when he was a poor muleteer, he came on one of his journeys to the neighborhood of Damascus. When he caught sight of the city, lying in the midst of its bowers, he gazed on its beauty and turned away without entering it, exclaiming: "Man can have but one Paradise, and my Paradise is fixed above." The prophet Jeremiah, in the name of a citizen of Damascus, calls it "the city of praises, the city of my joy." But why speak thus in praise of Damascus? That I may make this point: Its beauty, its vitality, its antiquity, its wealth are all due to one cause, viz., the river Abana. "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" The Abana is the very life-blood of great Damascus and of the whole surrounding fertile plain. But for it the whole plain would match the bleak hills that loom around it. It is literally a river of life.

Naaman, the Syrian, was right when, physically, he pooh-poohed at the river Jordan in comparison with this river which made Damascus. There



THE RIVER ABANA FLOWING THROUGH DAMASCUS.

was no such river in all Israel. The Jordan was no such river. I traced the Jordan, from the spot where it ingloriously empties itself into the Dead Sea, up to its source in Dan, where it gushes almost full size from the base of Mount Hermon, but I found it as nothing in comparison with the Abana. It did not make Galilee, it did not make Judea. It never created any civilization. It never turned a mill-wheel. No great city was ever built on its banks. The valley through which it flows, owing to its tropical heat, is malarious and drives the population to the adjacent highlands. It has never been anything for navigation. No fishing industry has ever been carried on in its waters. It has helped agriculture only in a limited way, and that in Galilee. The Judean half of it might disappear without producing any serious loss to the civilization of Palestine. The civilization of Palestine is found, not in its valley, but up on the centre tableland, hundreds of feet higher than the Jordan valley. The Jordan got its famous history, not from its physical value, but from its relation to the God of Israel. It was a sacramental river. It was as such that it made its record. God made its waters life-giving to Naaman of Damascus. The touch of the sacred feet of the priests and the mantle of Elijah gave it its fame. John and Jesus made it holy water by converting it into God's Baptistry. Jesus Christ was baptized in it. It was the silver cord upon which

God strung as golden beads the thrilling events in the history of His covenant people.

Jerusalem knew just what the Jordan was; that it meant nothing to a great city; that it meant nothing to the surrounding country of a great city; that it produced nothing in civilization. Jerusalem said to God, "I have no Nile to make me as Egypt. I have no Euphrates to make me as Babylon. I have no Abana to make me as Damascus. I have only this little Jordan; and it is nothing." God replied to Jerusalem: "I know it. You have no Nile; no Euphrates; no Abana. I am your Nile; I am your Euphrates; I am your Abana. I will be a River unto thee. I will make thee great without the Nile; without the Euphrates; without the Abana. Have I ever been a wilderness unto Israel?"

What God promised to be, that He was to Jerusalem; its River; the Source of its life. What if Damascus have the Abana; is not God better than the Abana? Can Damascus, the Abana-made city, compare with Jerusalem, the God-made city? Notwithstanding the great age of Damascus, notwithstanding its large population in all times, we cannot associate a single great action with Damascus, or a single great action with any one born in Damascus. I mean an action that has blessed the wide world. The associations of Damascus are all of idolatry, cruelty, and bloodshed. You cannot say that of Jerusalem. Jerusalem, with

God in place of a river, has a better record than that.

In Judea there were none of the natural conditions of a great city; but God built Jerusalem there, and made it a great city. God made it the leading city of the world; for, far above and beyond Athens, and far above and beyond Rome, it taught the nations truth and justice, and gave to mankind that which purifies and makes society strong and blessed. It became so grand, and beautiful, and estimable that it gave its name to that ideal city which men have all along been trying to build on this earth, viz., the New Jerusalem, the City of God descending out of Heaven. Jerusalem was not impregnable, but, what was far better, it was in charge of an invincible Providence. So long as its people were loyal to God, it stood invincible.

My fellow-men, you know the history of Israel, and the relations of God to that history. Answer: Was not God everything to that nation? You know how God talked with that nation, in the person of Moses, on the threshold of its career. The words of Moses are familiar to you:

If thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments, thy God will set thee high above all nations of the earth, and all these blessings shall come on thee. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and

the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket, and thy store. Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out.

The Lord shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face; they shall come up against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways. The Lord shall bless thee in all that thou settest thine hand unto. The Lord shall establish thee an holy people unto Himself. All people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord, and they shall be afraid of thee.

The Lord shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give rain unto thy land in its season, and to bless all the work of thine hand, and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and shalt not borrow!

You know how these words were fulfilled. You know what God was to Israel when Israel trusted God. God was the equivalent of harvests—infinite harvests. God meant the early and the latter rain. God meant the cedars of Lebanon, the clothing of the mountains of Palestine; and the Rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valley, the clothing of the lowlands and plains of Palestine. God meant progress, growth, victory. God was the equivalent of an all-around greatness. As Moses said, Israel became so great under God that she gave to the world; never borrowed, never received from the world. The world had nothing to do in her making, but she had everything to do in the making of the world. Under God, she gave the world principles, precedents, theologies, moral sciences, holy men, and magnificent

leaders. "Thou shalt lend unto the nations, and not borrow!" She has given the world more than Egypt, the cradle of learning, has given; more than Babylon, the centre of ancient wealth; more than Tyre or Sidon, the creator of silks and colors; more than robust Germany; more than brilliant France; more than sunny and tuneful Italy, the land of artists and architects; more than Christian England, with its statesmen and scholars; and more than great America, the land of civil and religious liberty. The golden crops of ideas, and principles, and moralities, and spiritualities, and religion, reaped from the harvest-fields of Judea, Samaria, and Galilee, have nowhere as yet been equalled in all the world. "Thou shalt lend unto the nations, and shalt not borrow!"

This is the story of God in His relation to Israel, His covenant people, viz. : He made Judea the land of righteousness, and truth, and peace, and goodness, and uprightness, and salvation. Certainly this is not the harvest of a wilderness. He made Jerusalem a city of magnificent fellowships, with holy and infinite ideas; holy and infinite purposes; holy and infinite loves; holy and infinite relationships; holy and infinite memories. It was the city of sublime faith in the one living and true God. It was nothing short of a soul rapture. Certainly this is not the harvest of a wilderness. Look at the products of this land. It grew Abraham and the patriarchs; Moses and the

prophets; David and the psalmists; John and the evangelists; Peter and the Apostles; Jesus Christ and great Christendom; the Bible, the Book of God, and Christianity. Certainly, this is not the harvest of a wilderness. These grand things can grow only upon the banks of the River of Life.

We talk about the blessings which the Jew has given the world, and we explain his fruitfulness by saying that his was the aristocracy of brain, and his the aristocracy of blood. This is not the explanation. The true explanation is this: The Jew has given to the nations of the world, and not borrowed, because he has been the covenant-child of God. God in the Jew made him a blessing; God in his brain made him an Isaiah, with the roll of prophecy in his hand; and a John, with the Apocalypse in his hand. God was in his brain; the indwelling God always expands the mind. God was in his blood; God was in his civilization; God was in his sacred writings; God was in his Messiah. God explains the Jew, and only God. God, not as a wilderness, but God as a River of Life. Because God was what He was to his covenant people, therefore He could challenge them with the question of the text, "Have I been a wilderness unto Isarel?"

My fellow-men, God is dealing with us this morning just as of old He dealt with His ancient covenant-people. He is here with His old question, and He puts it directly to us: "Have I ever

been a wilderness unto thee? Have I been regardless of your need of salvation? Have I overlooked the fact that you are ignorant and need instruction? Have I been deaf to your entreaty? Have I been without sympathy in your time of affliction? Have I but half opened the door when you sought to return to My love and confidence? Have I starved you? Have I led you amid stony places? Have I been inhospitable to you when you looked up to Me for the Bread of Life, and for nourishment?" What a power a simple question is when used by the Lord. It is a witness against the soul; it is an impeachment; a challenge; an accusation; an argument; a criticism. When God asks a question He pronounces a judgment. His question searches us through and through. His question carries its own answer. It is judicial, and leaves us without defence before God.

But why does God come this morning and ask us the question of the text? I suppose the reason is: We have minimized our God; we have underestimated Him; we have misrepresented Him to ourselves; we have neglected Him; we have failed to apply to Him, and to make large appropriations of Him. He questions us because of our low thoughts of Him; our murmurings; our dissatisfactions; our lean and hungry looks; our low attainments; our forgetfulness; our shifting policies; and our worldly alliances. He sees that we are positively weary of Him, and that we

are limiting Him, and keeping Him from working out His grand ideals in and through us.

Brethren, God is not a wilderness to us. We have been false and barren to ourselves; but God to us, *never*. Whenever we have let God into our lives, and His blessed Son, and His sacred Book, and His holy day, and His Eternal Spirit, we have had all things, and have abounded.

That you may be helped to give a right answer to God's question, let me mention at least three things relative to God in which there is not an atom of the wilderness.

1. *His precepts, whereby He instructs us, are not a wilderness.*

It is, as the Psalmist says concerning His commandments, "Each thought of thine, a deep it is!" We need His precepts as a guide, and in no day more than in this day. There are others speaking to us from other books than the Bible. They are intellectual men, able men. They are persons capable of treating great subjects in a great manner. They have long ago discounted Moses, and the prophets, and the psalmists, and the apostles. They have taken their own consciousness as a guide. They exalt what they call their spiritual instinct. They make that infallible, in place of God's Word. The result is, they are leading man away from God. Let me ask you, Is man's instinct equal to God's omniscience? If not, then the time has not yet come to give up

God as our guide, especially in the things which pertain to eternity. It is said that in Norway, every three or four years, swarms of little animals, called the lemming, find their way to the coast, and swim out to sea where they perish in great numbers. A false trust in instinct, or, rather, in an experience too narrow, seems to be the clew to this phenomenon of collective suicide. Instinct is all right within narrow lines. It is all right in swimming little Norway rivers and lakes; but it is all too inadequate when the lemmings reach the vast ocean, with its unknown areas. Let no one here be the victim of the overweening confidence of man. Wait until God fails you; wait until He proves a wilderness, before you put in His place any man, however gifted, as a leader in things which pertain to the eternities. Israel may count upon it that God will lead her safely to Canaan.

2. His promises, whereby He heartens and inspires us, are not a wilderness.

I need not stop to utter a single word of argument in confirmation of this fact. The statement is almost axiomatic. And yet, notwithstanding, we, many of us, are like wilderness people. Spiritually we are gaunt and lean, and half-starved. We are rich in promises, only we do not know it. In the Kingdom of God we are like the historic Indian in the republic of America. This Indian found his way into one of our Western settlements. He was in search of food, for he was

starving. A bright-colored ribbon was seen around his neck, from which there hung a small pouch. He was asked what this was, and he replied that it was a charm given him in his younger days. He opened it and took out a worn and crumpled piece of paper and handed it to the settlers for inspection. On examination, this crumpled piece of paper was found to be a regular discharge from the Federal army entitling him to a pension for life. It was signed by General Washington himself. Here was a man with a duly signed promise securing him ample provision for every emergency, and yet he was wandering about hungry and helpless and forlorn, begging bread to keep him from starvation. That is a picture of many Christians. They are poverty-stricken while holding in their hands divine claims upon the very wealth of Heaven. Take the promises to God and have them realized. Get them cashed in courage, in peace of conscience, in assurance, and in divine communion. Our need is receptivity—power to receive God.

3. *His Christ, by whom we are saved, is not a wilderness.*

He is the supremacy of God's revelation. As the Revealer of God, He has a name that is above every name. He shows us that the genius of God is infinite love, infinite plentifulness. In Jesus Christ, God gives to mankind universally. Christ was not local, He was universal. True, He walked

in Galilee and talked with the fishermen of that place; but He talked to the universal soul. True, He sat on the hillside over across from Capernaum, and, in a low, sweet voice, uttered those wonderful Beatitudes of His; but at the same time He preached that immortal Sermon on the Mount to all future generations of men. True, He partook of a simple meal in an upper chamber of Jerusalem, with nobody present save His twelve disciples; but it is just as true that around that board, in the vision of faith, there were ranged the weary, and the penitent, and the bereaved of all nations and of all centuries. We know what we have in Him—pardon of sin, freedom from all condemnation, peace of conscience, ideals toward which to grow, freedom from the fear of death, and the purifying and uplifting hope of a blessed immortality. These are not the harvest of a wilderness. Strike Jesus Christ and His few months of ministry in Palestine out of existence, and all the elements and facts which vivify society and ennoble our life disappear as the rays of light disappear when the sun is quenched. Our chiefest blessings radiate from His divine personality. Christ is God at His best—God in His fulness. In reaching God through Moses the lawgiver, through David the sweet singer, through Isaiah the evangelical prophet, and then through Jesus Christ the divine Son, we are like the traveller in the Alpine land making new and advancing dis-

coveries of the beauties of the Alps. When he reaches the first brave altitude, and gets his first thrill from the vision about him, he says: "This is the place for me to live; I'll nestle my cottage on yonder slope, and live with this prospect forever before me." He pushes on, however. When he reaches a few miles farther up he says: "No; I was mistaken, this is the place for me; I will build my home here; the air is purer and more exhilarating. The altitude is bolder, and the landscape is wider and finer in every feature." He is exceedingly talkative. "This is the place for my home." But still he pushes up and on until he reaches the very heart of the Alps. There is a wonderful glow in his countenance, as though he were standing face to face with God. But why is he dumb and silent? He has just reached the Jungfrau. Its figure is majestic; its purity is unspeakable. It has burst upon him in a glory he never dreamed of. He is enthralled; he is overawed. He is silent. He cannot analyze it; he cannot put its beauty into words. There is no formula for the Jungfrau. This is the fulness of the glory of the Alps. This is the place above all places for his home. My fellow-man, if you have not reached Jesus Christ in your knowledge, and in your faith, and in your love, you have not yet reached the Jungfrau in the Alps of truth. He is the fulness of God. But if you have reached Him in your knowledge, and in your faith, and in

your love, you have found the true place for the home of your soul. Blessed is that man whose life is hid with Christ in God. Are you such an one? Then "my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

In the study of this morning we have found what God is to His people and what He is not. The practical lesson contained in what we have found is this:

We should be like God. We should be to others what God is to us. Christ says, "that all to whom he gives the water of life, out of them shall flow rivers of living water." That is, they shall be rivers of life unto others.

A wilderness, or a river? that is the question. Which are we? What are we as part of the Church of Christ? What are we in the item of prayer? What are we as an inspiration to others? What is our faith? What is our love? Are we fruitful or unfruitful? Do we enrich the home, society, the body politic? What do we give forth from our Christian personality? Sympathy, love, experience? What are we doing with the things of God? What are we making out of His gifts for the blessing of others? God gives us Christianity with its precepts and principles: what are we doing with it? Are we turning it into the practical and needed things of life—forgiveness, charity, honesty, truthfulness, helping hands? Are we concreting Christianity? Taking it out

of a creed and putting it into a life? This is the best way to help others. This is what God expects us to do. God always leaves a margin for men to work in and show their quality. He creates stone, but He leaves it for man to build the house. He grows the wool, but man must run the loom and make the cloth. He gives the corn, but man must grind it and bake it, if he would have bread. Christianity comes to us as a germ, as unhewn stone, as uncarded wool, as unthreshed wheat; what are we doing with it to make it of practical service? Christianity is the simple gamut. What is the song into which we are converting it? Are we singing the song of salvation into the souls of others? God is giving us wide margins in life in which to work and to become blessings to others. Are we working Christianity out in a splendid, fruitful life? There is such a thing as a noble discontent. I wish to see such a discontent in you. Yet I do not wish to discourage you while calling you to high and Godlike things. I hear you say: "We cannot maintain the level of the life you are prescribing." True you cannot; but God in you can. Your sufficiency is in Him.

Robert Louis Stevenson—the man of whom Margaret Ogilvy was so jealous, because she was afraid that he was out-distancing her son—was working on the very night of his death on his new and great work. He felt that he was outdoing himself, and an anxiety, such as yours, came into

his heart which led him to ask this question: "How shall I keep up the pitch?" Do not trouble yourselves about keeping up the pitch. It is not necessary nor possible to keep up the pitch in Stevenson's sense. Men are not always equal. Shakespeare wrote baskets of rubbish; Wordsworth, pages of platitudes; Homer nodded many a time; Paul rabbinized. The human life of Christ was not one level. He had His moods. Gethsemane was one mood; His rejoicing at the report of the Seventy who came back saying, "Lord, even the devils are subject to us in thy name," was an altogether different mood. Calvary was a whole series of alternating moods. Your duty is to do the best you can to-day and trust to-morrow with God. The best at the time—that is all either God or man can ask of you. "How can I keep up the pitch?" Stevenson was anxious over-much; for that very night God relieved him and crowned him with an everlasting crown. Be the best river of life to the world that it is possible for you to be; but do not worry as to whether you shall dash in a cascade, or plunge in a cataract, or overflow the banks in an irrigating flood; God will see to that. Flow where God sends you; flow as God gives you volume. Count upon this fact: the man who is always a river of life will never be a wilderness. God is a River of Life, but never a wilderness. We, His people, should be like Him.

THE THINGS WE SHOULD LEAVE FOR
CHRIST.



A WOMAN OF SAMARIA WITH HER WATER-POT.

III.

THE THINGS WE SHOULD LEAVE FOR CHRIST.

“The woman left her water-pot.”—JOHN iv. 28.

I CHOSE this text at the hour of noon, while resting on the very spot where Jesus rested, and where He talked with the Samaritan woman. I chose it at Jacob's Well, on the very stone where the woman left her water-pot. There may be discussions as to other sites pertaining to Scripture incidents, but there is no discussion whatever as to the site of Jacob's well. This is the best identified spot in all Palestine. One visit by the Lord Jesus Christ made it forever famous, and impossible of being forgotten or mistaken. A plain, unpretentious stone corridor surrounding a vault-covered well, the mouth-stone of which has been grooved by the ropes of ages—such is Jacob's well. But it is more famous than the Parthenon and older than the Pyramids. The well has been purchased lately by the Greek Church, and is kept by one of its monks, who to-day solicits subscriptions of all visitors for the laudable purpose of restoring this spot to its ancient glory.

Between the noontide of May 11th and May

12th I was highly favored as a traveller in the Holy Land. During those hours I was permitted to stand in three holy places, places which were holy because they were places where God had especially revealed Himself to the sons and daughters of men. During these hours I lunched at Bethel, I tented at Shiloh, and I partook of a noon-day meal at Jacob's well. At Bethel God dropped His spiritual ladder into Jacob's soul, and linked Heaven and earth together, and made the place to him "the house of God and the gate of heaven." At Shiloh God first "set up his name in Canaan and his tent in Israel." It was in the holy tent of Shiloh that God spake to the boy Samuel and called him to greatness. And here, for nearly four hundred years, the glorious Shekinah shone above the mercy-seat between the cherubim in the Holy of holies. But the greatest revelation of God was at Jacob's well; for to Jacob's well the Son of God Himself came. He was the true Shekinah, in whom dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Here He held forth one noon-day, and by one grand talk revealed Himself as the long-looked for Messiah. This was the Word made flesh and dwelling among men. Three such spots of revelation, seen in twenty-four hours—Bethel, Shiloh, Jacob's well, all holy places—that was enough to make any twenty-four hours a memorable day! That outer May day was grand. The sun was shining in its strength, the

atmosphere was clear and crystalline, the flowers were in full bloom, the vale of Shechem was freighted with the waving grain at the beginning of barley harvest, the birds were warbling, the brooks were murmuring, the air was ringing with the voices of the children at play. The outer, the natural day was grand; but it was not half so grand as the inner, the spiritual day, which flooded the soul with the light of Heaven, and gave it celestial harvests, and drew for it refreshing water from the River of Life which flows from beneath the throne of God.

The first thing which I did on reaching Jacob's well was to drop a light eighty feet into the well and verify the words, "Sir, the well is deep." Then I lowered a bucket and drew it up full of the historic water. Then I drank; and all the while I thought of Jesus Christ and His gift of the Water of Life. After a refreshing draught, I gave myself up to the reading of the fourth chapter of the Gospel according to John, and to re-living the scene of eighteen hundred years ago. It is wonderful what the influence of being there is, and of reading there the words of Jesus. It gives a new vividness to that great chapter, which is so full of life and spiritual movement, and which records, with such minuteness, the most marvellous conversation ever carried on by means of human speech.

When I came to these words, "The woman left

her water-pot, and went her way into the city, and said to the men, Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" I said to myself, "That shall be my text when I stand again in the old pulpit and preach Jesus Christ to my people."

So far as this woman is concerned, that is the climax of the story of Jacob's well. She so finds Christ, and Christ so finds her, that everything at once becomes subordinate to Christ, and to the work of making Him known to a dying world.

It is a very little item for the Bible to notice—that she forgot her water-pot and, for the time being, lost sight of her purpose in coming to the well; but this little item reveals the whole character of the woman, and the new state into which she has been lifted, and the new ambition which has been put into her life, to sway it forever. Little things are used to make great revelations. To tell us that Paul was soundly converted the Bible says, "Behold, he prayeth." To tell us that this woman is wholly absorbed by Christ, and is Christ-filled and Christ-swayed, the Bible tells us, "The woman left her water-pot." Little, unstudied acts reveal just what we are, and show what is supreme in our lives. The things which we unconsciously give up emphasize the things we have newly chosen. When we choose, with an all-absorbing choice, the higher things, we instinctively give up the lower things; and we give them up

without hardship, without thought, and as a matter of course.

But let us get Jacob's well clearly before us, with its surrounding neighborhood; for the neighborhood is as much in the Gospel narrative as is the well itself. The whole region round about Jacob's well is rich in Biblical association, and the whole region, you will notice, is woven into this conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. I do not believe that there is another conversation, or passage, or discourse, in all the Gospel, in which there are so many local allusions, as are found in this conversation; and the beauty of it all is this—these local allusions are not merely incidental, they are, every one of them, homiletical. The water is made a text; so is the mountain; so is the field, and so is the town. They are all used to bring out religious lessons and convey soul-saving truths. Jesus makes everything vocal, and by a chorus of voices proclaims eternal life. It is this which makes Jacob's well a place of such great interest. Places become interesting to us because of what transpires at them. For example, the church to whose door Luther nailed his theses is interesting to us; so is the spot in Perth where John Knox preached the sermon which set in motion the Reformation of Scotland; so is the prison in which John Bunyan wrote the "Pilgrim's Progress." In like manner, Jacob's well is of interest to us because there Christ first

proclaimed Himself the promised Messiah and offered eternal life to the children of men.

Reaching Jacob's well by the route from Jerusalem is no easy task. Judea is the hill country, and it is hard to travel. There are no made roads anywhere. There is at best only a rough track. Sometimes this track runs over the dry bed of a winter torrent, which is filled with boulders and cobble stones that roll under the horse's feet. The rough track is up one steep and down another steep; and these steeps are bare rocks, smooth and slippery and full of crevices, which keep one in constant fear of sprained ankles. When it is written in the inspired narrative that after such a journey "Jesus was wearied," the whole country says, "That is true." The very roughness of the country testifies to the truthfulness of the Book. But when you get to Jacob's well, you are through with the rough country. You at once strike the vale of Shechem, which is an oasis in the wilderness, and is as beautiful and as full of fertility as any chosen track of land can be. Here you strike the singing birds and the music of running waters.

Jacob's well is on the end of a low spur, or swell, running out from the northeastern base of Mount Gerizim. This spur is about thirty feet above the level of the plain, and commands quite a view of the scenery around. Jesus, from this slight altitude, could see everything which He wove into the conversation. There was the great

mountain of Gerizim before Him, three thousand feet in height, with the Samaritan temple upon its summit, the glory of Samaria. I rode to the top of that mountain, and tied my horse to the ruins of that very temple which filled the eye of the Master. It was here that I had one of the finest views of Palestine, and saw the greater part of the whole land at one sweep of the eye. Palestine is noted for one thing, and that is its mountain-top views; and every time one comes upon them they are an uplift and a surprise. If it were not for these, travel there would be tame; but, with these, travel is a delight. Almost every time one of these sublime views burst upon my vision I looked abroad and said: "A wonderful land; historic for wonderful men and wonderful thoughts and a wonderful life, and a wonderful God."

From the summit of Mount Gerizim, I looked directly down upon the vale where Joshua once gathered the tribes of Israel to listen to the reading of the blessings and the curses. There were three millions of people there that day. One million and a half on the Ebal side and one million and a half on the Gerizim side. Was there ever an assembly on earth larger than that? As, from the improvised pulpit in the center, each blessing was uttered and rang along the valley-auditorium and up over the mountain galleries, the Gerizim people shouted a cheerful "Amen." And as each curse was pronounced, in a similar way, the Ebal

people shouted, "Amen." Thus the mountains cried one to another, like the sound of many waters, in thunders of cursings and of blessings.

I have said that the summit of Mount Gerizim, on which I stood, had on it nothing but the ruins of the Temple, which filled the eye of the Master when He talked with the Samaritan woman; but let me say, in addition, that the Samaritans have not all passed away. There is a community of them still in this place. The community numbers to-day one hundred and twenty. They worship in a synagogue in Nablûs, or Shechem, a town a little over a mile from Jacob's well. This synagogue I visited in order to see the old Samaritan Pentateuch, said to have been written by Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazer, the son of Aaron. Every year the Samaritans celebrate the Passover on Mount Gerizim, and slay their lambs and sprinkle the people with the blood thereof.

But I must not allow myself to get too far away from Jacob's well. It is still full enough and deep enough to supply us with sufficient streams of thought for one service. Think of this old well, and think of its long work of mercy! Through hundreds and through thousands of years at its brink have stood old men, little children, weary pilgrims, fair maidens, grim warriors, stately sheiks, dusty travellers—all sorts and conditions of the East and of the West. It gave forth its water to the good and to the bad. I have some-

times thought that it gave to the prophet of God his suggestive figure of God's blessing, viz., "the wells of salvation," which is often used in the Book. I have sometimes thought, also, that it suggested that grand invitation of the Apocalypse, which has in it the music of cool, sparkling, and satisfying water—I mean these grand words: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

My fellow-men, the very presence of Jesus Christ at this well, in the heart of Samaria, in view of the hatred that existed between the Jews and the Samaritans, is a revelation in itself, a magnificent revelation of Jesus Christ. It shows the breadth of Christ and the intensity of His love, and the wideness of His nature, and the all-comprehensiveness of His sympathy, and His great desire to save. Viewed rightly, it is an act incarnating those grand words of hope, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." I say to you who are here this evening, and who are students of the Book, that the revelation we get of Jesus Christ through His dealings with the Samaritans is no mean revelation. It shows Him superior to all prejudice; it reveals Him as the universal Saviour; it sets Him forth as broad-minded and large-hearted.

Remember how bitter the feud between the Jews and Samaritans was. It was centuries old. It was religious. It was inherited. It was educated hatred. It was backed up by the fathers. It was so intense that the Jews had no dealings whatever with the Samaritans. In going from Judea to Galilee they would not go through Samaria, but journeyed round it, at great cost of labor and time. Not one Jew in every thousand had ever seen Jacob's well. They kept miles of prejudice between them and it, miles of bitter contempt and hatred. Through all this Jesus had to cut His way before He could reach Jacob's well, that He might offer salvation to the Samaritan woman and to the city of Sychar. Even His own beloved John, the Disciple of Love, once wanted Christ to call down fire from Heaven and destroy a Samaritan village, because it was Samaritan enough and showed pluck enough to refuse to receive those who had all along heaped contempt upon it. Christ refused John the miracle of fire. That is in Christ's favor.

But this was only one thing in His dealing with the Samaritans. It was only the beginning. He never once recognized the bitter estrangement of the ages. On the contrary, He exalted the Samaritan above the Jewish priest and the holy Levite, and gave the Samaritan the honor of being the ideal philanthropist of the world, the type of true benevolence for every age. This He did when He

uttered the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Have you ever thought of the holy audacity which it required to utter that parable? That parable is nothing short of the product of divine courage as well as of the impartial spirit which is no respecter of persons, but which appreciates worth because it is worth. Now, in the Scripture before us, Jesus, coming straight from the Temple, to the horror of every right-minded Pharisee, enters the territory of Samaria, asks a favor of a Samaritan woman, offers her the best gifts of Heaven, accepts of the hospitality of the Samaritans, sleeps under their roofs, eats at their tables, teaches in their streets, treats them as though they were as good as the Jews, and saves a whole city. In the Temple, between the Court of the Gentiles and the Inner Court, was a marble screen, a curiously carved fence, two feet high, beyond which no Gentile could venture. It was known as "the middle wall of partition." Had a Samaritan put his foot inside of that "wall of partition" he would have been whirled away in a fury of rage, and stoned to death in the twinkling of an eye. But here, in this Scripture, is Jesus down in Samaria, trampling into the dust that middle wall of partition. Here He is, Himself the spiritual counterpart of the Temple, admitting Samaritans within the pale of divine sympathy and love.

Have I told you all that pertains to Christ's dealings with the Samaritans? Not all. One

thing remains as yet unREFERRED to. When the cross and the tomb have been passed, when the Resurrection has taken place, and when on His way to the Ascension He gives His disciples the commission to go into all the world and witness for Him among all nations, He mentions the Samaritans by name. He says to His disciples, "Preach salvation in my name to them." "Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." What is this but the golden text among all texts translated into life? "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." My fellow-men, the revelation of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, through His dealings with the Samaritans, is a grand revelation. I do not wonder that this Samaritan woman felt the power of His great love, and yielded her heart and life to Him on the instant, and forgot all about her mission to draw water from the well, and put in its place a rapid missionary tour to the city of Sychar.

I should like at this point to speak of Christ's treatise upon worship, in which He declares a universal God, accessible everywhere, and found in all places by the pure in heart, and approachable by all; but for this I have no time. He issued the declaration of independence in the matter of worship. He preached the doctrine of absolute

liberty of conscience from all thrall of place or tradition in the matter of worship. He broadened out the Holy of holies until it took in the wide world.

I should like at this point to speak of the estimation in which Jesus holds the single soul. An audience with just one immortal soul was an audience to Him; and an audience worthy of His very best. The most essential truths of His Gospel He preached to audiences of one. There was only one man present when He preached the great doctrine of the "necessity of regeneration"—Nicodemus. There was only one woman present when He preached the great doctrine of the "Resurrection"—Martha. There was only one Samaritan present when He preached His Messiahship for the first time—the woman of Samaria.

I should like at this point to speak of this woman as the best type of a good listener. There is a duty of listening and an art of listening. Good listening makes good preaching. Too often the ear is preoccupied. Invisible speakers are addressing it. It is under a spell. While the pulpit speaks, the pews are buying and selling; yea, they do a little business sometimes even in the middle of the long prayer. Who would attempt to deliver a message to a man a mile off? Yet there are some people in church to-night who are three thousand miles off. Listen as though you were the only hearer. I should like to speak

of the art of good listening, but I cannot. I must sweep everything aside and centre my thoughts wholly upon this one fact of the story of Jacob's well, viz., "The woman left her water-pot."

You understand the mental state of the woman. She was carried out of herself. She was lifted into a new life. She was face to face with One who met her highest ideals. She saw a new future. Her vision had a new outlook. Her water-pot, which was the symbol of her occupation and her past life, grew to be nothing; Christ grew to be everything. She was Christ-entranced, and Christ-absorbed, and Christ-controlled. The horizon of her life was widened. She came to that well a mere water-carrier. She left it a Christian missionary with all the ardor of a new faith. What does it signify—this substituting Christ for the water-pot? It signifies that when Christ comes into one's life as an enthusiasm He changes the standard of values. When Christ becomes supreme, other things, as a matter of course, take subordinate places. It signifies this great truth: There are things which we should leave for Christ. We should be able to leave these things without a single regret. We should be able to leave them with enthusiasm, with joy, without so much as the cost of a thought. This is what the Christ-absorbed do, but they are Christ-absorbed who do it.

Three things which we should leave for Christ are plainly suggested.

In the first place, we should leave all fallible guides for Him who is the infallible Guide.

In leaving her water-pot at the well, and going with all haste to the city to tell others of her great find, this woman left the Samaritan Pentateuch, the fathers, the traditions, the very things which had been all in all to her; her standards, her guides, and she put Christ in their place. Christ was all in all to her now. Christ's teachings, and not the teachings of the fathers, were her rule of faith and life now.

There is a like change in our lives, if we have accepted Christ in spirit and in truth. Fashion, the customs of the world, the criteria of society, popular literature, the force which guided us in the days gone by, are all displaced, and Christ's Gospel, and Christ's example, are our inspiration. We have exchanged the fallible for the infallible. Is there any one here who can question the advisability of such an exchange? Do we not all know that we are the disciples of somebody? Why, then, not be the disciples of the best? I can say truthfully to every one in this audience: "Somebody is your leader; somebody teaches you, and you follow." There is no need to argue this. You follow the man who edits that newspaper. You follow the author of that book. You follow the dictator of that political party. You follow

that iconoclast. You follow the fashion plate of that tailor. There is somebody who is an authority in every man's life. This is so with the atheist; this is so with the agnostic. My point is, choose the best. And I offer you Christ as the best. Be a disciple of Him who is infallible. He leads into the widest, and truest, and freest life. He comes directly from God and He leads directly to God. Say to Him while you now abide in this sacred presence: "To whom shall we go but unto Thee, for Thou hast the words of eternal life?" We should leave the fallible for the infallible.

In the second place, we should give up our prejudices, and, in the stead of these, we should substitute the world-wide loves of Christ.

This, also, the Samaritan woman did; and it was this that made a new woman of her, and gave her a new and an immortal career. We have shown you that there were no prejudices in Christ. If the prejudices of His kindred had ruled Him, He would never have been at Jacob's well. The Jacob's well episode would have been an utter impossibility. There were no prejudices in Him, and the woman felt the electric and purifying touch of that life which had only love in it. I know of no chains which bind a man to smallness in everything like the chains of prejudice. These make the narrow sectarian in church life; the bigot, the persecutor. These are the antique grave clothes wrapped around the body

when it is prepared for the sepulchre, and they mean death. They must be unloosed, and Lazarus must be let go. The grandest work any man can do for us is to deliver us from our prejudices.

A gentleman on the other side of the Atlantic told me this incident, which serves me here as an illustration. He said: "I was admiring, last spring, a tree in full blossom. It was a miracle of beauty. The gardener, seeing my rapture, said, with a shrewd, complacent air: 'Well, sir, I might say I gave the tree these beauties which you admire.' 'Ah, how is that?' He replied: 'For seasons the tree bore nothing. I pruned its branches, but to no purpose. It occurred to me to dig down and prune its roots. I did so. I found that the tap-root had struck into a coarse, sour soil, and thence drew evil for the tree. This I cut and set the tree free from the sour soil to which the tap-root bound it, and you see the result.'" That is it. Prejudice is the tap-root that burrows in the sour soil. He who cuts the tap root for us, and so sets us free from the unwholesome, the mistaken, and the wrong to which we are in bondage, does the best possible thing for us. He gives us new life and new beauty of character.

Jesus Christ does this for us. He made the Samaritan woman a new woman, an attractive woman, the joy of all the ages; and He did this by simply freeing her from her old-time preju-

dices. The woman entered a grand life the very moment she surrendered her prejudices and substituted for them the broad loves of Christ. We must give up our prejudices for Christ.

In the third place, we must leave all lower things and motives and ambitions and allow the higher Christ-like things and motives and ambitions to take their places.

In the case of the woman of Samaria the water-carrier became the missionary. That was an exchange of the lower things for the higher. That was a decided advance in the ambitions of life. All Christians are like this woman when they are found of Christ. Matthew the Publican becomes Matthew the Apostle. He forgets his money-desk. James and John forsake their nets and fishing-boats. Augustine leaves the teaching of philosophy and takes to the preaching of the Gospel. Constantine stops building temples to idols at Baalbec and uses the marvellous stones he has quarried in building a basilica for the Master. Where men do the same things after conversion which they did before conversion, new motives and ambitions are introduced into the doing of them. These things have a new objective point. Business is made a medium of fellowship with God. The shop is consecrated and made a holy place. Gain is laid on the altar of divine service. Things that are questionable, which shadow the character, are forsaken for the glory of the Master. Un-

holy pleasures lose their relish. Only those things which elevate and lead Heavenward have the power to enchant.

Do not say that I am putting painful restrictions upon men and women in preaching as I now do. If you are enchanted with Christ, I am preaching pleasure, not pain. The woman of the text suffered nothing in leaving the water-pot. The higher things which we seek include all that is good in the lower things which we leave.

The people of Dublin tell this story of a poor man who used to sweep the crossing of one of their principal streets: As he had swept the streets for years he became a well-known character to the hundreds who crossed and re-crossed where he daily labored. He was weather-beaten and illy clad. A prominent lawyer in the city, in his practice, came across a certain legacy for whom no heirs were found. The name of the testator haunted his memory, and became a torment to him. It tormented him because he said to himself "that is a familiar name to me, but I cannot place it." At length it came to him—"that is the name of the old street-sweeper; I wonder if he could be of the same family?" He studied the case up and found that he was. He was the heir whom the court wanted. The facts of the case established, it became the duty of this lawyer to make known to the old man his good fortune. The old man was hard at work when he went to

him. There, in the middle of the street, he told him his story, and the old man stood, broom in hand and mouth wide open in astonishment. This is the way the story ends. "So carried away with the pleasure and excitement of his good fortune was the old man that, unconsciously, he dropped his broom where he was standing and followed the attorney to enter on his new career." The broom! He had always been careful of that before. The broom! that had carried in it his livelihood. But he dropped it in the middle of the street, and forgot it, and left it where the wheels of traffic would break it to pieces. Do you wonder at his treatment of the broom? He is a rich man now. Why should a rich man hold on to and carry around with him an old broom? I tell you, my fellow-men, leaving the lower things of life for the higher things of Jesus Christ is only dropping the old broom because we have become rich with the riches of our God. There is nothing painful in that. Our great concern should be to be absorbed in, and entranced by, Christ. Pain in giving up things comes to us only when we are not absorbed and not entranced. It should be ours to put the entrancement of Christ against the entrancement of the world. It is because we are entranced by the world that we cling to the lower things. Are you entranced by the world, or are you entranced by Christ? Make that the question which you shall settle this Sabbath-day. It

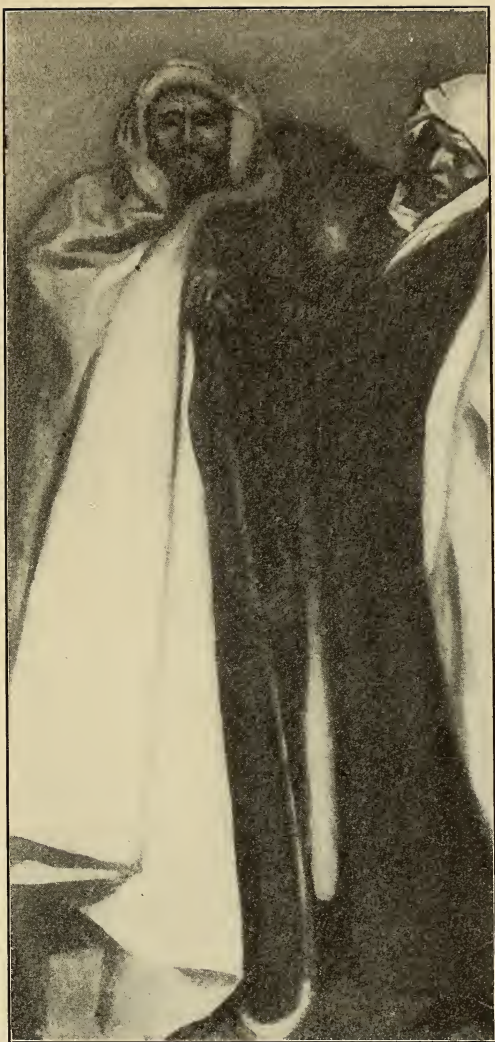
is a question for the young, and it is a question for the old. It is as much a question for the old as it is for the young.

Bunyan sets this forth in his immortal allegory. The masterpiece of his insight into life is just this: He places the Enchanted Ground right near to Beulah Land, almost at the end of the Celestial road, within eye-shot of the Celestial City itself. It is a master stroke of Satan, after a man has had experience, after he has come safely through the Slough of Despond, and escaped from Doubting Castle, and conquered Giant Despair, to take him with his vast experience and lock him up in the enchantment of the world, in luxurious laziness, and in inactivity. He retires him from religion. He makes a nonentity out of him. Are you talking about giving up religious work—stepping down and out of the post of responsibility? Let me tell you, you have reached the Enchanted Ground, and it is the place of the Christian's greatest temptation. If Satan gets you into that ground, you will never get to Beulah Land, although Beulah Land lies right over the line. I sound the note of warning, "*Beware!*" Meet the enchantment of the world by giving yourself up more and more to the enchantment of Christ and His service.

I ask you to notice in closing how much depended upon the conversion of this one Samaritan woman, and upon the willing yielding of herself

up to Christ. The conversion of the whole city of Sychar depended upon it. She carried in her decision the eternal destiny of a whole city. This is a point for those who have not made an out-and-out public decision for Jesus Christ. Your conversion does not stand alone and unrelated. Nobody's conversion does. Does that not move you? It moves me tremendously. Does the eternal destiny of others hang upon my decision for Jesus Christ? Then I will decide for Jesus Christ right here and now. I will be saved for the sake of the salvation of others. I have put you in a solemn place, and, God helping me, I am not going to say a single word, or do a single thing, to help get you out of that solemn place, or to lessen your sense of awful responsibility. You hold in your hand the salvation or the non-salvation of others. If you decided for Christ you would carry with you the decision of every member of your household for Christ. You know that. You would carry with you the decision of your friend. You know that. You would carry with you the decision of your business partner. You know that. You would carry with you the decision of your fellow-clerk. You know that. If these do not become followers of Jesus Christ, who will be responsible? If the woman of Samaria refuses Christ, and if the city of Sychar goes out into eternity Christless, who will be responsible? *Who?*

THE PLUMB-LINE,
OR
THE HERDSMEN OF TEKOA.



THE PROPHETS AMOS AND NAHUM. BY SARGENT.
From the Frieze, Boston Public Library.

IV.

THE PLUMB-LINE, OR THE HERDSMEN OF TEKOA.

“And the Lord said unto me : Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumb-line. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb-line in the midst of my people Israel.”—AMOS. vii. 8.

THE text is a drama. God and His prophet are the actors. This form of presenting truth is chosen to make truth striking and effective. One thing God is determined to do and that is, to get hold of the mind of man; to be listened to when He speaks. For this purpose He adopts all expedients and all styles in presenting His revelations to the human world. Sometimes He throws these into the form of poetry and gives them to man clothed in the power of beauty. At other times He casts them into the form of thrilling history, and in this way captures the attention. Sometimes He incarnates His message in a human life; at other times He puts it into the form of a penetrating question, which carries it right into the soul. Sometimes He uses a picturesque parable; at other times He works it into a drama. That is what He does in our text; He works His message into a striking drama. He holds up a plumb-line

and makes it talk to His people. "Behold, I will set a plumb-line in the midst of Israel."

Drama, as a medium of revelation and a method of teaching, is very effective. It holds the attention; it instructs; it makes thought and fact clear and tangible. Christ used it. He spake parables; and what are parables but dramas, *i.e.*, men and women dialoguing and acting their several parts? Notice how large is the stage and how many are the actors in that pearl of parables, "the parable of the prodigal son!" Christ's dramatization of truth was effective too. It not only held the attention of men, it moved them. Sometimes it moved them down to the very roots of their being. Take as an illustration the Pharisees who waited on Christ's ministry. It is written, "And they perceived that he spake this parable concerning them." And did not that move them? Surely. So long as the truth remained a parable it was a picture which fascinated them; but when it passed into an application, it at once became a judgment—a plumb-line—an exposé of their conduct and character which moved them to wrath. In the form of an application it was the sting of fire touching their conscience. It angered them. Certainly Christ's drama had a moving power on that day when the people of Nazareth seized Him bodily and rushed Him to the brow of the hill on which the city was built, that they might hurl Him headlong over it to His

death. As I rode up toward Nazareth, I found my eyes riveted upon that historic brow; and I said to my soul: "Soul, there is the witness that your Master was a faithful and an effective preacher. He moved people by His preaching. His sermons were pointed and direct." I was not satisfied until I was permitted to enter into the synagogue of Nazareth and see for myself the spot where He preached in such a moving fashion, and to read there in an audible voice the very scripture which He once read to the people when He declared Himself to be the promised Christ.

But let us come back to the drama of the text. The actors are God and His prophet. God speaks to the prophet, and the prophet replies to God. They talk confidentially and familiarly. Mark this fact, God addresses the prophet by his name. He says, "Amos, what seest thou?" He calls him by name. This is the Lord concentrating Himself upon the individual; and this God does with every child of His. He calls us each by name. There is always something tender when knowledge comes to a knowledge of one's name. It is the familiarity of love. There is an off-hand naming of a person which amounts to nothing; but there is another naming which amounts to a baptism, yea, which is a holy sacrament. It means that we belong to God, and that God belongs to us. It means that we are satisfied with God, and that God is satisfied with us. It means that God

and we are one in life and love and aim. The plumb-line dropped into such a fellowship reveals that the straight-line in God and in us is one and the same straight-line—*i.e.*, God and we are one in all things.

Who was this man called "Amos" who was so one with God that God called him by name, and employed him to speak for Him in Israel? Very little is known of the man. He wrote a very small book of one hundred and forty-six verses, and he is known only by and through that little book. The heroes and prophets of the Bible are divided into two classes; first, those who are mighty through their personality, and second, those who are mighty through their writing. Abraham, Samuel, Elijah, Elisha were mighty forces in their day; but so few of their prophetic words have been recorded for us that they are figures rather than voices to us—that is, they teach by their lives rather than by their words. They influence us as characters. It is different with Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. These influence us by their writings, which have come down to us, as well as by their characters. Amos must be classified with these latter men of the Book. He influences us by his writing. In this writing there are, however, one or two verses which are autobiographic, and from these verses we evolve the story of his life.

In brief this is the story of the life of Amos:

He was born at Tekoa, a hamlet twelve miles south of Jerusalem, on the crest of the wilderness of Judea. This is the wilderness of which I spoke to you at large a few Sabbaths ago. Out on this unmitigated wilderness, this chaos of hills, where life is reduced to poverty and danger, Amos developed a manhood which was abstemious, and rugged, and straight-forward, and full of beautiful simplicity. His wants were few, so his demands in life were few. On the windy uplands where he lived, his life was winnowed of everything that would pamper and weaken and make effeminate. He was all man. He was a herdsman out on those wilds, and he lived an out-door life. He had much time which he could call his own, and had large opportunity to meditate and think and talk with God. There was nothing in the wilderness to bias his conclusions; nothing to warp his judgment. Here he got those figures and parables which give vitality, and vividness, and strength to his messages.

You see from all this that Amos was a layman. This made him the practical prophet which he was. He had no diploma, no certificate of standing, no papers. He did not spend a single day in the school of the prophets. He never went to a theological seminary. God is not dependent upon theological seminaries. If Harvard and Yale and Union will not give our young men the right type of faith and training, God will go to Northfield and pick out leaders from the country boys who

are there, and who are working their way into an education; and God will find in them men who will grandly lead Christendom. He has already found such men there. God wants men who know no sophistry, who are single-hearted, straightforward, practical, direct; who possess a strong unequivocal faith in the Bible, and who have the courage of their convictions. If Bethel, with its theological seminary, has not such men to give His people, God will go to Tekoa and make a prophet out of Amos the herdsman.

But was there no work required and no work done in the making of Amos? Certainly there was work done. There was some long and hard thinking done. Days and years were spent under the tuition of God. The times and their need were analyzed. The writings of Moses were mastered. God's great principles which are operative in the universe of social life were studied and fathomed. Amos schooled and trained himself. He believed that Tekoa was on God's map, and that it was down on the route of God's march, and there amid the drudgery of his cowboy life he trained his conscience by communion with God, and by the study of the law, so that when God's hour struck, and the mask which concealed his true and growing personality was drawn, discerning eyes saw in him a choice soul, a glowing genius, a veritable prophet of God, the one man of all men for the hour. He was a moral standard in himself.

The method of preaching righteousness which Amos adopted was very simple. It was this: he formulated the great moral principles, which rule in human life and which have the omnipotent God back of them; and he brought the facts of the life of Israel alongside of these principles. and then from the correspondence of principles and facts, or from the lack of correspondence, he made clear the doom of Israel. When he announced that doom, his words were peals of thunder.

We cannot but admire the tact of Amos in the execution of his task. It was his task to rebuke Israel for their sins. Israel constituted the northern kingdom; Amos belonged to the southern kingdom. The two kingdoms were rivals. To get a hearing from one's rival required sagacity. Amos possessed the requisite sagacity. He approached his purpose adroitly and by progressive steps. He began afar off. He began with Damascus, and uttered his woe against its sins. Damascus was an old enemy of Israel, and the people responded to the prophet's words, and said, "Good; he is a man of truth." The next day he uttered his woes against Gaza, or Philistia. Philistia was another enemy of Israel, and the prophet's second woe was as pleasing as his first. It increased his fame. The next day Tyre, another enemy of Israel, was denounced. The day following a fourth woe was hurled against a fourth foe, against Edom. Then a fifth woe followed, the

woe against Moab. The next day Amos was brave and took up and handled his own nation, Judah, and denounced its sins. This won Israel completely. They said "this man Amos is as great as Elijah; he is a veritable prophet of God." You can imagine that each day his audiences grew. Israel liked the way he handled other people's faults. The last day has now come, and it is Israel's turn. This is the culminating point, and toward it the prophet has all along been working. He has the ear of the people now, and he effectually delivers his message to them, and brings them face to face with their sins. He teaches us how to deal with men. He would be a good man for the pulpit of to-day.

Amos dealt directly with the people. Other prophets dealt with the rulers of the people. For example, Nathan and Gad dealt with David; Elijah dealt with Ahab. Amos spake to the people. He met them face to face and openly in their presence tested them by holy principles. He dropped the plumb-line of principle right into the midst of their wealth, their social fashions, their treatment of the poor, their spirit of worship, and their ideals of religion. His ministry culminated one day at Bethel in the midst of the people. There was a great feast in process there, and to the feast Amos directed his steps. In the midst of the thousands of Israel he enunciated principle after principle, and arraigned fact after fact from the life

of Israel, and then made rousing and pointed applications. He swept the crowds with conviction. There was no answer to his sermon that day. "You cannot answer a thunder-storm; anything an opponent may say after a whirlwind is feeble." There was no attempt to answer him. Only this took place: Amaziah, the priest, who was directing the feast, stung by the brave and burning words of Amos, confronted Amos and used his judicial authority, and in the name of the king silenced the prophet and cast him out of the place. That is the way he was answered, that is the way he was disposed of. The prophet was gagged. All he could do now was what he did do, viz., sit down and write out his prophecy and make a book of it. Amos silenced, wrote a book. He was the first of all the prophets to write a book. The book which he wrote is the book which gives us our text. His silencing by priest Amaziah was not an unmixed evil. It impelled him to write his book, and by so doing to set the example to the other prophets of writing their prophecies in books, and thus making them powers for all time.

The text is a fair exhibit of the way Amos presented truth to the people. He dramatized. In the drama of the text, which might properly be called "The Drama of the Plumb-line," he introduces God to Israel as the chief actor. He represents God as holding up a plumb-line before the

people and saying to them: "Behold, I will set a plumb-line in the midst of Israel."

Now what is God's message to the world through the plumb-line? That is our present question. I answer, this is the message of the plumb-line, viz.: Man is a responsible creature. He is responsible to himself; he is responsible to his fellow-men; he is responsible to his God. His responsibility is the most solemn fact in all his history. It is the greatest fact.

It is so because he has to deal with God. God fixes his responsibility. The omniscient God tests him—his innermost thoughts, his principles, his motives, his purposes, his associations, his avocations, his pleasures, his religion, and his character. God applies the plumb-line. Man is tested by an unerring God, and by an unerring plumb-line.

Are you afraid of this fact? Does it terrify you? Do not be terrified; you have no reason to be afraid. God has a noble purpose in applying the plumb-line. He wants to make you perfect; He wants to bring to light your defects that He may remove them. Every plumb-line has as its objective point a perfect building, full of grace and symmetry and strength. The decree of the plumb-line is this: "Let every building be so erected that it shall be a safe dwelling-place for man." Let any man be built according to God's plumb-line, and he will be a veritable temple of

the Holy Ghost, a perpetual dwelling-place of God. I used to be afraid of the testing of the omniscient God, but one verse of the Bible has taken away this fear, viz., this verse: "The Lord searcheth to know his people that he may do them good." God's omniscience is consecrated to the service of doing good to the children of men. We test God, we test Christ, we test the Bible; why should we object to be tested in return by God, and by Christ, and by the Bible?

My fellow-men, you know what a plumb-line is. It is an architectural instrument. In architecture it is indispensable. It is a simple cord with a plummet on the end of it. When thrown out into the air it oscillates and vibrates and swings, and sways to and fro until the plummet finally stops and rests, and the cord which holds it forms a straight line. That is what every builder wants—a straight line—that he may run up the wall which he is building alongside of the straight line and have his wall straight. A bulging wall, a bowing wall, is a thing of weakness; a straight wall is a thing of strength. A straight line is a simple thing, but it is an essential thing in this world. A thousand things depend upon it. Without it the walls we rear would lose their balance. Without it there would be no fifteen and twenty storied houses in New York. Without it there would be no geometry; but can any one calculate what geometry has done for the world? There

would be no measurement of distances. The world absolutely could not get along without the straight line. It is part and parcel of the order of creation. Things must be built on the perpendicular, and must be kept on the perpendicular.

My fellow-men, now that you know what the plumb-line is, what do you think of the plumb-line? I am anxious that the plumb-line shall stand well in our estimation. It is introduced here by the text as a test, and is made to take part in the work of inspection. This is likely to prejudice us against it. It is exalted as a critic in our midst. We are fond of criticism only when some one else is criticised. We are not fond of it when we are the party subjected to it. It is natural to us to entertain hard thoughts of every critic who brings to bear his canons of criticism upon us personally. The plumb-line is a critic. What is your opinion of the plumb-line?

Personally, I highly prize the plumb-line, because I keep constantly in mind God's purpose in judging us by it. He means to make us morally and spiritually straight-up-and-down men and women. He means to make us like His own holy Self. I classify the plumb-line with such things as these: the alphabet, the multiplication table, the grammar, the catechism, and the crucible. As a boy I worked hard in mastering the alphabet, and the multiplication table, and the grammar, and the catechism. I hated the name of the man who

wrote the grammar, and set down the Westminster divines as a hard-looking set of old theological fossils, with not a particle of love for children in their stony hearts. I saw nothing to admire in the alphabet, and only recognized the separate letters in it; because I hated each one of them in their regular order. That was years ago. I think differently of these things now. The catechism is a grand compendium of truth; it is much in little; it is truth systematized, truth analyzed, truth clarified by exact definition; it is truth interpreted and truth arranged in a form that can be remembered. The grammar reduces language to a science, masters it for us, and makes it usable. The alphabet opens a door into a thousand minds, and introduces us to the thought of all generations. It captures the best thought of the world for us, and makes it visible and eternal. The alphabet means Homer's Iliad, the dramas of Shakespeare, the psalms of David, the writings of the prophets, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It means all these grand things in an imperishable form.

These are the things with which the plumb-line is associated in my mind by natural affinity. And they are all grand and serviceable. They are all parts of the world's progress. They are all able to speak in their own defence and give a laudable reason for their existence. The alphabet says, "I give perpetuity and circulation to the

best thought of the world; the Bible is my product." The grammar says, "I give speech its perfection." The catechism says, "I give truth its luminous definition." The multiplication table says: "I save labor and give men the mastery over figures." The crucible says: "I give the world pure gold, gold of the seventh refining to be wrought into coin and jewelry and crowns." The plumb-line says: "I give the world its architecture—the Parthenon of Athens, St. Paul's of London, and St. Peter's of Rome. I bridge rivers and chasms, and build homes and throw up into the air glorious temples. I correct everything that is crooked and weak. I give the world the straight line, and the straight line gives the world whole sciences which are useful and indispensable." Verily the plumb-line is a grand thing.

Now just as the physical plumb-line is a grand thing in the physical world, the moral and spiritual plumb-line is a grand thing in the moral and spiritual world. That is the point of our text. We need the spiritual plumb-line because we are prone to measure ourselves by wrong and defective standards. We have made substitutes for God's plumb-line. We use the imperfect among our fellow-men as a plumb-line, and measure by them. The large-feeling self-satisfied Pharisee measured himself by the publican who stood afar off in the temple. "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are; or even as this

publican." Certain men in Christ's day took the fashion set by aristocracy as the proper standard; they asked: "Have any of the rulers believed on him?" We substitute the spirit of compromise as a plumb-line; we substitute public opinion. We substitute the common law of the land. For example, if we want to evade an honest debt which has grown old, we plumb-line our conduct by the common-law statute of limitation. By common law our debt is outlawed; so we claim we have no debt. In God's eyes that is a base swindle. According to God's law nothing can liquidate an honest debt but the actual payment of that debt.

But let us limit our application of the drama of the plumb-line. The subject is too large for general treatment. Let us limit it to ourselves as a church. Let us realize this one fact, viz.: God is here dropping His plumb-line into our midst, and testing us as a Christian church. He wants to show us wherein we are defective; for He wants to improve us, to correct us, to make us stronger and more successful. He wants to get us ready for a magnificent future. He wants to give us a new life.

I hear you ask just here: What is the plumb-line which God uses in testing us as a church?

The question is pertinent. In the days of Amos God used great and everlasting principles as a plumb-line. What does he use in our day? Let me hear you answer: What do you think He uses?

One replies, "He uses the most successful church in the community as His plumb-line." Another replies: "He uses the Bible; that is His plumb-line." Another says, "He uses our opportunities as a plumb-line. To whom much is given from them also much shall be required." All of these answers are very good, but there is a better answer. The better answer is this: "Christ is God's plumb-line." He contains and sums up in Himself all the excellences of all the other plumb-lines, and adds to these all that is necessary to perfection. Christ is God's straight line. Our church is to be judged and tested by Jesus Christ—His spirit, His life, His gospel, and His ideals of a Christian church. He plumb-lined the seven churches of Asia, away back in the past; and now, this very hour, He is plumb-lining us.

Are all things in our midst as Jesus Christ would have them? If not, we are a weak church, notwithstanding our numbers, our wealth, and our men noted in the community. Each single thing in our midst that is not according to the mind of Christ subtracts just so much from our real and lasting success. For success we must be according to the mind of Christ. A church that is not according to the mind of Christ is a bulging wall, from which stone after stone will drop until the whole wall is levelled to the ground. Christ is in our midst just now asking questions. Let us reverently listen, and let us carefully gather up

and ponder the revelations which these test questions of His bring to light. Each question He asks is the dropping of the plumb-line alongside of our latest work.

The first question which the Master asks is, "Where is Amos?" "My church should be full of stalwart laymen; thinking men who consider the signs of the times; men who make a deep and thorough study of the church itself, its defects, its possibilities, its needs, its reputation, its influence, and who willingly respond to the suggestions and the demands which come out of such a study." Amos is the man who puts the church first in his life. He is in business for the church. He follows his profession for the church. He selects the location of his home with reference to the church. He arranges the engagements of his social life so as not to conflict with the services of the church. Where is Amos? Which of you men is Amos?

The second question which the Master asks is, "Where is your Pentecost?" A Pentecost should be a constant thing in every church. This is a possibility. When the conditions are realized and complied with, it is an actuality. To be filled with the Holy Ghost, and with power, is the birth-right and privilege of every Christian. Brethren, are you enjoying a Pentecost? Are you personally full of the Holy Ghost and of power? Are you Pentecostal men and women? If you are,

then why do you not live and work like Pentecostal men and women?

The third question which the Master asks is, "Where are your converts?" "If you have been working for converts, you have converts. My early church worked for converts, and it got three thousand on one day and five thousand on another day. The Church of God gets just what it works for. When it works for conversion and employs the means for conversions, it gets conversions. When it aims simply to make itself a home for the well-to-do, a home for social life, a place for mere entertainment and the feeding of the pride of fellowship, it succeeds in that—*i.e.*, it becomes a mere club-house with its music and fine oratory, its sociables and entertainments. It becomes a refined playhouse. When it aims at nothing, it gets nothing. I have put this church into this community to save men. Where are your converts? The primitive churches all had converts. Where are yours?"

Brethren, let us make this question of the Master a personal question. That is what it is. Let us take it home each one to himself and herself. It is an individual question. The individuals make the church. It is the individual man who is the duplicate of Christ in the world. God is here to-day calling, "Amos!" "Amos!" "Amos!" "Amos!" "Amos what seest thou?" "Amos what believest thou?" "Amos what doest thou?"

“Amos what contributest thou?” “Amos whom savest thou?” “Amos where are thy converts? I have given you sons and daughters to bring up for me, where are they? Are they one with you in the Christian life? I have given you brothers and sisters; I have given you business partners; I have given you friends and neighbors. Have you reproduced yourself in these? Where are your converts? If you have associated with people and have not led them to Christ, you have done them more harm than good. If you have not secured their conversion, you have neglected them. If they have seen nothing in you that they desire, nothing over and above and better than that which the world gives them, then either you have not got the true religion yourself or else you have misrepresented the true religion to men.” My fellow-men, be assured of this, viz. : the men of the world are moved Christward only by an anointed character and a transfigured life. But they are moved by these. Personality influences. The Gospel incarnated is a power. When you can show men something in yourself, something noble and profitable and enriching; something which they have not got; something which Christ gave you, and which Christ alone can give, they will go with you to Christ, and they will join you in your Christian faith and devotion. When you are what you ought to be you will have converts. Where are your converts?

But are there not some present in this service

who as yet are out of Christ? It seems to me there are. There is a question here for you. The plumb-line of God is laid to your life. Christ asks you this testing question: "What more can you reasonably demand of me in order to faith and acceptance?" And what more can you demand of Christ? What more can you reasonably ask? He has given you His divine revelation; He has revealed the Father unto you; He has brought life and immortality to light; He has given you His perfect and all-satisfactory human life; He has given you His holy doctrines; He has given you His cross which is the exhibit of God's infinite love; He has given you the proof of His resurrection from the dead; He has given you Christendom with its incomparable civilization. Name a single other thing which He ought to give you, in order to procure your faith! If you cannot name a single other necessary thing which He ought to give you, then you stand this day before all the universe condemned, self-condemned, for your cold-hearted, inexcusable sin of unbelief. For long, long years you have been putting Christ to the test, and have been perpetually keeping Him on the defensive; but now on this plumb-line-day Christ meets you and puts you on the defensive. What you need above all things is to be searched through and through; and this is what Christ is doing here and now: searching you through and through. He is asking this searching question: "What more

can you reasonably demand of Me in order to faith and acceptance? ”

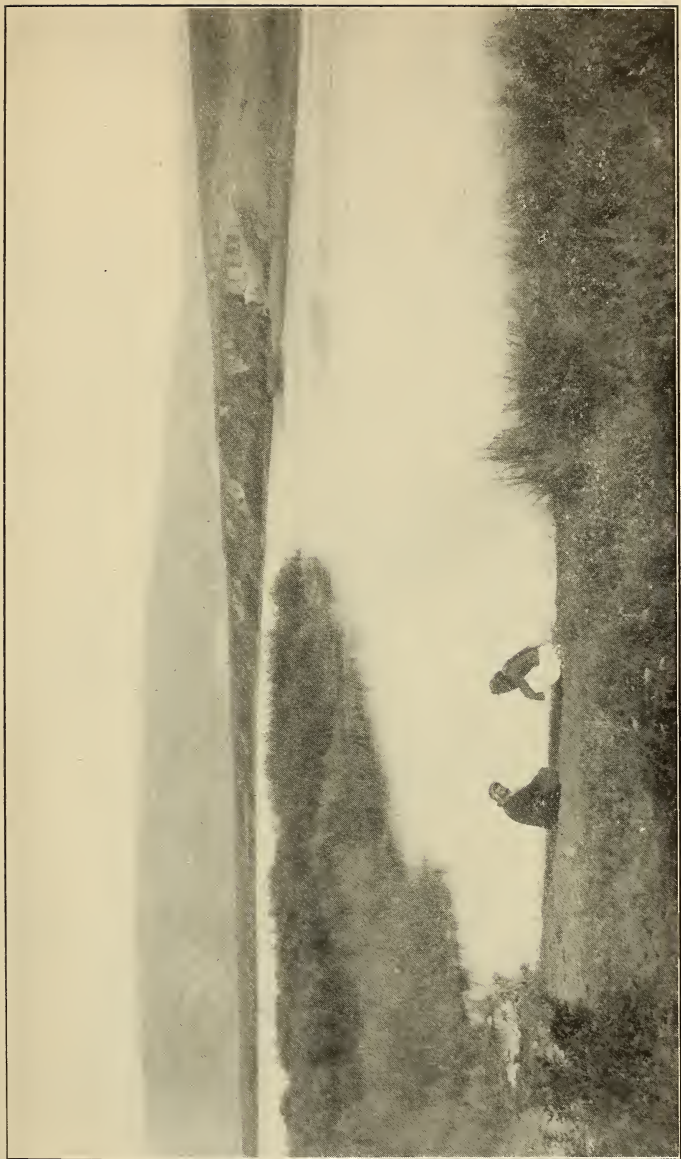
I tell you openly and frankly there is nothing more that you can reasonably demand of Christ. He has given you all you need. You have now all that the millions ever had who have believed in Him. You have that which has made great Christendom. As you value your immortal soul, search yourself this day and find if you can ask a single additional thing as an answer to Christ's straightforward question. Either the plumb-line is wrong or you are. Which is wrong?

What shall be the result of the letting down of God's plumb-line into our midst this holy Sabbath? Christ has been here and has questioned us. What are we going to do with His questions? We know the intent of His searching questions; are we going to allow them to accomplish this intent? He means His questions to set into the light our defects. And then He means that we shall give ourselves to the eradication of our defects. He means His questions to act as a revelation of our possibilities. The very things He asks us if we have, we can have. The very things He asks us to be, we can be. The very things He asks us if we have done, we can do. The very blessings He asks us if we have received, we can receive. The holy ambitions which He asks us if we entertain, we can entertain; and more, can realize. The converts which He asks us if

we have secured, we can secure. We can be the church He expects us to be, and we can each be the individual Gospel-power He expects us to be.

Brethren, above all things, that which we need is just this: To be searched and to be tested by God's straight line. It was God's thorough and effective searching that made Abraham, and Moses, and David, and Isaiah, and Amos, and Peter, and John, and Paul. These men were perpetually letting the white light of God shine upon their characters, and upon their lives, and into the innermost recesses of their soul. God searched them often, and after every searching they took a new start in His cause. We are about to leave the temple, but do not let us leave this subject. Let us continue the study of it through this whole day and through this whole week. Let us go into our own lives with God's searchlight and God's plummet; and as we search and discover, let us eliminate and introduce, repent and resolve, renounce and re-dedicate. Let us throw away the old life and enter upon the new life. The one thing, the one thing, the one thing we need is to be searched and searched and searched by Him whose eyes are omniscient, and whose supreme desire toward us, His children, is that we shall be holy even as He is holy, and perfect as He is perfect. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

WHY NOT THE MEN AS WELL AS THE
WOMEN? OR, A FAMILY 123-26
FROM THE SEASHORE OF GALILEE.



THE SEA OF GALILEE WITH THE JORDAN OUTLET.

CHAPTER V.

WHY NOT THE MEN AS WELL AS THE WOMEN? OR, A FAMILY FROM THE SEASHORE OF GALILEE.

“Then came to him the mother of Zebedee’s children with her sons, worshipping him.”—MATT. xx. 20.

My text contains my subject by implication rather than by direct statement. But it contains my subject. My subject is in the blank spaces of the text. Here is Salome with her boys, James and John, but no Zebedee. The wife in loyal allegiance to Jesus, but the husband not. Zebedee’s sons magnificent Christians; but Zebedee, the father, outside of the church. As one writer says: “Zebedee was never found with his family among Jesus’ professed disciples. He alone of his family was not at the cross.” Now why did he absent himself from Jesus? Why did he leave all the religion of the home to be looked after by the wife and mother? Why must the woman of the house do all the praying, and all the public confessing, and attend to the religious training of the children, and maintain the character of the home for religion? “Why not the men as well as the women?”

I answer, there is no reason "why not." Men need religion just as much as women do. And the religion of Jesus Christ is as fitted to men as it is to women. Every man who follows in the footsteps of Zebedee shirks his duty, robs himself of his privileges, throws an additional burden on his wife which she ought not to be compelled to bear alone, and cheats religion of the moral influence and power which it is possible for every manly character to generate and contribute. Men have not as yet gotten beyond Jesus Christ that they should stay apart from Him. Jesus Christ is not unworthy of the homage of men; He has not diminished in the least iota. There is nothing wrong, nothing lacking, relative to the power of Jesus. His power is still here. It is here in His strong pictorial words; it is here in His beautiful and perfect life; it is here in His superb self-sacrifice; it is here in His cross. Jesus Christ is still worthy to receive all honor and glory and power and riches and wisdom and blessing.

For the benefit of the men who are not in open allegiance to Jesus Christ, and who are not out-and-out Christians, let us discuss briefly Zebedee and his conduct. Let us look at the *pros* and the *cons* in his case.

There are some things to be said for Zebedee. He was the father of two of the grandest apostles. Would that save him? No. Only a man's per-

sonal faith in Christ can save him. If this be so, then what does it signify to say that "Zebedee was the father of two of the grandest apostles of Jesus?" How is this in his favor? It signifies that he was not an open opposer of Jesus. While he was an aloof, he was a friendly aloof.

You have before your minds the story of the way Jesus took his sons away from him. It is this: Jesus at the beginning of His public ministry one day walked along the shore of the sea of Galilee until He came to the boat-landing of Zebedee. He found the boats in, and Zebedee was there, and his sons James and John and the hired servants; and they were all at work mending the nets. Jesus made that journey with an object. He went especially to call James and John to a life of discipleship. When He reached there, He told His errand and invited the young men to join Him at once. We think of this visit of Jesus and of this invitation as being a test to James and John. We forget all about Zebedee. It was a test to him. It meant a dead loss to him. His sons were full grown and capable of helping in the business. They were able to take many a load off his shoulders. He needed them in the boats. And then, besides, who was this Jesus who wanted to take them away? He had no career as yet. It was a great sacrifice for Zebedee to make, but he made it. When Jesus called his boys to leave him, he made no objection to their going with

Jesus. Their call changed all his plans of life for them. The lake seemed lonely without them, but, no matter, he let them go. He remained behind, willing to work for his family, and to pay the bills, whatever their religion might cost him. The apostles must have somebody to provide for their living expenses.

This sets Zebedee out in a very favorable light. Yes, it does—that is, if there be nothing more to be said—that is, if this be the whole story. But this is not the whole story. This is where you men, who are simply friendly aloofs, make your mistake. You stop reading here. You make this the whole story, and you congratulate yourself that you are like the head of the Zebedee family. You are not unfriendly to Christ and His Church. You put no hindrance in the way of your wife's religion. You allow the boys to go with her, and are rather glad to have them go. You furnish money for the church collections, and pay the pew bills willingly. You toil at business for this very purpose. Thus you state your case, and you say: "This is the man I am; and, to tell the truth, I call my conduct quite fine." It would be quite fine if that were the full statement of the case. It would be quite fine if there were not something a great deal finer. To go the full length of duty is finer.

Let me now state the other side of the Zebedee case.

His failure to step forth and to be out and out for Christ does not satisfy those who love him most, and who most wish for and pray for his salvation. It is not kind to them. It shadows him with a doubt. It leaves the way open for this question: Notwithstanding he was a good man, a generous man, and a financial supporter of the church through his wife; yet, after all, did he really take Christ for his Saviour; did he really believe in Jesus Christ to the saving of his soul? Was his attitude toward Christ one of child-like humble trust, or was it merely a patronizing attitude? There is a vast difference between patronizing Jesus Christ and trusting Jesus Christ as your Saviour. The former puts self first; the latter puts Christ first. A man may let his wife join the church, and his children join the church; and he may willingly pay all the church bills of his family, and yet do nothing more than patronize Christ. Now I leave it to you: Will patronizing Christ save a man? If you were in Christ's place, would you consider it an honor to be simply patronized, when you knew that you were worthy of deep-souled love, and homage, and the absolute self-surrender of men? I leave this also with you for answer: If you fail openly and fearlessly and constantly to confess your faith in Jesus Christ, is there not room for an interrogation point to be put opposite your name when your form lies silent in the casket and when your friends gather to take the last look?

Is there not room for a distressing doubt to spring up in the hearts of those who love you best, and who want, above all things, to know that it is well with you forever? Is it not likely that this painful thought may flash through their minds: "If he really believed in Jesus Christ, he would have said so; he would have confessed this belief as we have heard him confess other beliefs?" My fellow-men, an open honest confession of your faith in Jesus Christ is the greatest service of consolation which you can render to your friends in anticipation of the hour when they shall be called tearfully to imprint the last kiss upon your cold brow. You can make it certain to them that heaven is sure to you.

There is another point in this line, viz.: The failure of Zebedee to do his full duty by openly allying himself to Christ and Christ's cause is an implied reflection on his wife. It discounts her religion and the power thereof. The Bible says that where the wife believes and the husband does not, that if the wife be true to Christ, and thorough in her faith, and complete in her consistency, she shall by her religion win her husband to Christ. You may praise your wife's religious character by word of mouth, or you may write a nice letter about her religious life to a friend; but it is inconsistent for you thus to praise her religious character while you dishonor her religion, that power which built up her character. The only way you

can honor her religion is by being religious yourself. So long as she fails to win you, her religion is discounted. Any man can see this. And any man can see also that his standing aloof from his wife's religion not only discounts her and her religion in the eyes of the public, but it positively injures her in carrying out her religion in life as she ought. She would be vastly stronger, and more grandly consistent all around with the help of your strength and by your example, if you were one with her in Christian faith and life. Her heart is drawn between the church and the home. She is sometimes tempted to discredit her own judgment in favor of the man's. The boys in the family take the father's manlier views and habits, and stop Sabbath-school, and later on stop attending church; and this, too, is against her, and makes religion a burden to her. When any one from the home goes to church, it is mother and the girls; and thus in that family religion is represented to be a thing altogether for women, and not a thing for men. I have heard Salome, that good woman who gave the Church two of its grandest apostles, blamed, and severely blamed, for the failure of her husband to become a confessed Christian. I have heard her called "an ambitious woman." I have heard it said that there was nothing in her religion but family pride. She was ambitious for her boys, and had an eye to the main chance, and joined the company of Jesus because

of that. She was infatuated with the coming kingdom and coveted right hand and left hand positions in it for her family. Zebedee saw through her, and weighed her correctly. He thought he could make more out of his boats than she was ever likely to make out of that coming visionary kingdom, and so he stayed by his boats. Now if so good a woman as Salome has been thus discounted and criticised because of her husband's non-confession, how do you think your wife will be rated in view of your non-confession? You may argue as you please, but your persistent non-confession puts her at a disadvantage before the public.

The chief thing against Zebedee is this: He broke up the wholeness of his family in the Lord. I want to lay great stress upon this point. For what Zebedee did many men in our midst do; and it is a serious thing to do. It is a greater strike at Christ, and at the cause of Christ on earth than any one thinks. Do you not know that Christianity is a family religion? Christ wants the whole family, parents and children, brothers and sisters, and what Christ wants that we should work for, and that we ought to be able to secure. For with Christ upon our side nothing is impossible. Let us work in our homes until not a member there shall be found Christless. Christ is in the midst of the churches to-day asking not only for the individual man and woman who is there, but asking for the families of the church. Non-confessing

father, do you hear that? Non-confessing brother, do you hear that? You who are Christians in the home, labor to give Christ the desire of His heart; invite the non-confessors in your households to Christ; talk with them, pray with them, tell them what God has done for you, picture to them the joy that will come into the home when the family is unbroken in its faith and love Christward, and when all can sing together the songs of Christ. Be dead in earnest in pleading with those of your own household, and let your earnestness rise up to the point of agony. Earnestness is argument. Earnestness is power. All through human life it is the earnest man that is the influential man. It is the men who are fire-pillars that lead. Now there is nothing so worthy of your earnestness and fire as the immortal destiny of your loved ones.

We do not emphasize as we should the family character of the true religion of God. This is a misfortune. Because, when we lose this view of religion as a covenant of God with the family, we miss one whole side of the revelation of God as we have this revelation in the Bible. God was not only the God of Abraham, but he was the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and the God of the twelve patriarchs. Andrew and Peter were brothers; so were James and John. Mary and Martha were sisters. The Phillipian jailor and his household came into the Christian church together, and so did Lydia and her household. Christianity

would be less than Judaism if it failed to reach the family and to make it the unit of the Church. For the Old Testament brought families as families under the law of God. The old Hebrews went up to offer sacrifices by families. No member of a Hebrew family thought of being absent from the paschal meal, and, least of all, the head of the household. Christianity is not one whit behind Judaism in anything. The true religion is pre-eminently a religion of the family. God wants religion to run in the blood, and there is no reason why it should not run in the blood. I am seeking households to-day for the Lord Jesus Christ. I am seeking for family altars. I am searching for the straggling members of our homes; the belated father, the overdue brother, the lost son, those who, by their tardiness in confessing Christ, are keeping the family fragmentary and broken before God. I tell you, my fellow-men, that there is a tremendous spiritual power in the presence and the united voice of an unbroken family in the Lord, as that family Sabbath after Sabbath fills the pew in the church, gathers around the Lord's table, and lives a peaceful, happy, God-fearing life in the community. It is as near the perfection of religion as it is possible to reach outside the walls of the new Jerusalem. If this be so, then it is an awful thing for the one member, or the two members of the family to remain apart from Christ, to refuse openly to confess Christ, and thus to nul-

lify or to hinder the power of the home for Christ and God in the community. My brother-man, there is no personal life that you can live, no character that you can build up, no service that you can render to the community that can be substituted for that wholeness of the family in the Lord which you prevent.

How many families there are in our community like this family from the seashore of Galilee of which Zebedee was the head. What was wrong with Zebedee? He broke the wholeness of his family in the Lord. He let his wife Salome go up to Jerusalem and minister unto the Lord; he let his sons James and John become the apostles of Jesus, but he did not join them. When Christ called them he made no objection, but he did not join them. He did many commendable things, but the main thing he did not do; he did not join his family in following Christ. He broke the wholeness of his family in the Lord. There is something sublime and majestic in the white-haired veteran Joshua standing before Israel and confessing with heroic determination: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." That testimony of a completed household for God moved all Israel to renewed fidelity and inspired the whole nation that day with uplifted hands to give themselves afresh to God in a solemn holy covenant. The confession of a whole household for Christ—that is confession in its highest and most

influential form. Zebedee might have had that, if he only had been true to himself, and to Jesus Christ, and to his family. But as it was, he broke the wholeness of his family in the Lord and weakened the power of all. I want to beget in your souls an enthusiasm for the family in its entirety for Jesus Christ, so that you may not rest until you reach it in your homes. Every member of the family for Christ! Let that be our motto and our watch-word. For this end let us live, and for this end let us confess Christ at home, and in the church, and everywhere. The family for Christ! Let that be our goal. But Zebedee, thou man at the head of the pew, that goal can never be reached until, as the head of the family, you do your duty and lead your household in the confession of Christ.

The Zebedee problem is now fairly before us; let us deal with it. Let us answer the question which it carries in it, viz.: Why not the men as well as the women? In dealing with the Zebedee problem, I wish first of all to set myself right with our noble Christian women. Let there be no misunderstanding here; while we seek for men and regret their absence, we do not undervalue the women who have been true to Christ and His Church. In our efforts to win the men we are not valuing one above the other, we are simply valuing both. While we call for Zebedee, the man, we prize Salome, the woman, and the grand work

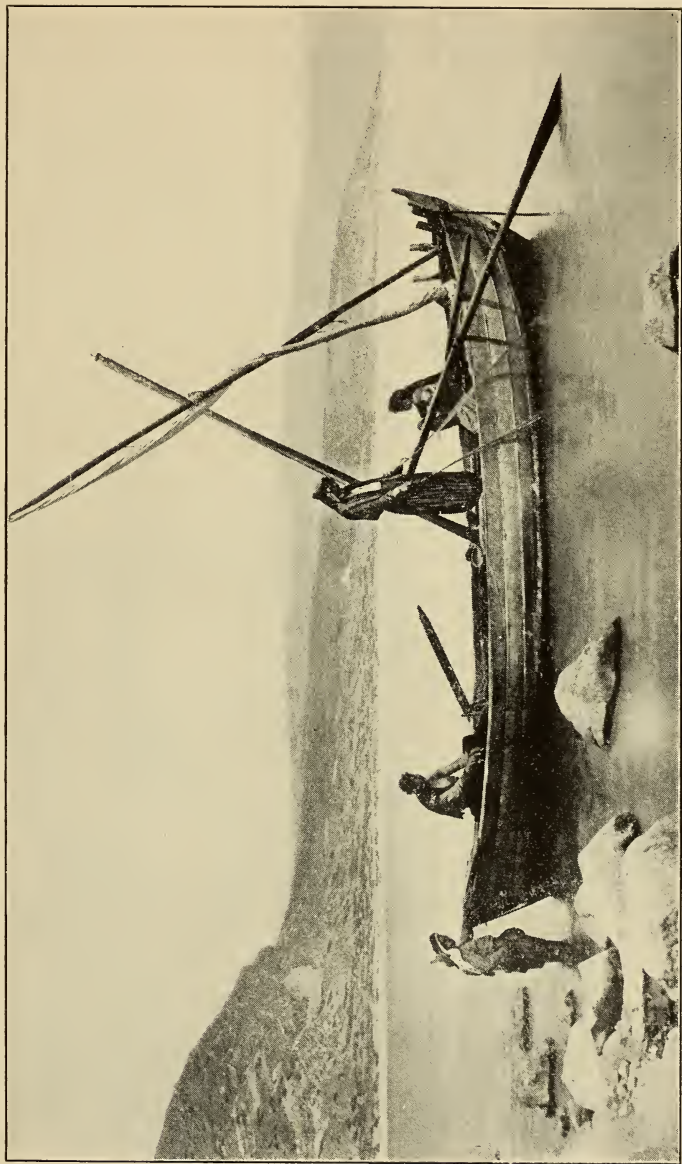
which she has done. We delight in the number of women in the church, and in their broadened influence there during these later days. The more women the better. If the men kept out of the church entirely, we should be glad to keep the church going solely for the women. We do not even consider it a discredit to have it said that religion is good for women; that is true, it is good for women. The Christian women of America are not the inferior part of America, they are decidedly the advanced part of America. They have finer intuitional powers, and a quicker and a keener insight into what is true and good and beautiful than men have. They love higher things and purer things than the men do. They are the conscience in the home and in society to a larger extent than men are. They take to religion more quickly and more heartily than men do, because they have a finer, purer nature than men have; and because they have more of the courage of their convictions than men have, and because there is more hold-out in a woman's nature than there is in a man's. There is more appreciation in a woman than in a man; she is more as a friend, and more as a lover. It is no discredit to religion to have her indorsement; and this we wish to assert with all our might, even while we give our complete selves up to the one sole work of securing for religion the indorsement of those who are men. The tacit assumption that man is superior

to woman, because woman is religious and man is not, we denounce as an assumption and nothing but an assumption. The superiority is on the other side. Woman plus religion; man minus religion—any one can tell which is the greater. I am not seeking men to-day so much because the Christian religion needs men, as I am seeking men because men need the Christian religion. The Christian religion could get along grandly with only the women. If I were confined to a choice, I would rather have Salome five times over than Zebedee. I am seeking Zebedee, but I am seeking Zebedee for Zebedee's good. I will venture to say that Salome was the better of the two. I will venture to believe that she led in everything else, as she led in religion. She placed her boys well in the Church, and I surmise that everything else that was well placed in that family was well placed because she placed it. It is said that John, her son, was acquainted with the high priest of the nation; I take that as an evidence that she saw to it that the family were well associated and that they had high fellowships and friendships. If Zebedee, her husband, had had the sense to fall in with her plans, as her sons fell in with her plans, she would have made him as great in history as she made her boys. What she made out of the boys shows what she had in her.

This in my point: While we seek for men, we do not wish the women to feel that we undervalue

them or their great work in the church. We are compelled to lay the emphasis upon men, because men fail so largely to see their need, their opportunity, and their duty. It is my conviction that in religion there is no difference between men and women—that is, no difference in their needs. To be religious is to be manly just as much as to be religious is to be womanly. As I see life, men and women have pretty much the same needs all around. They sit down together at the same family table. They breathe the same tonic air of winter, and thrive in the same spring sunshine. They admire the same beauties of nature and are thrilled alike by the same rapturous strains of music. Now what is there to differentiate them in religion? Nothing. As they enjoy the same earth, they need the same heaven. What is good for the conscience of one is good for the conscience of the other. There is no sex in conscience any more than there is in God. The cross speaks alike to both. The duty of telling the truth in all their dealings, in the parlor, in the store, in society, is an equal duty with both. When both bend over the same coffin they need precisely the same vision of heaven and the same hope of meeting their loved ones before the throne of God as a source of comfort. Tell me, ye who are men, what one religious want has woman that man has not? And what duty or right is binding on her that is not binding on you?

But I am asked by the men: "Is there not a difference between the life of men and women? Is not a life of trade, for example, altogether different from a life of housekeeping in its needs?" I answer: Yes, it is different; different in stir and bustle, different in breadth and variety, but in its call for religious principle, No, it is not different. In the call for exemplification of Christ and His Gospel, No. Many a man says to his wife, "Oh, it is all right and good and beautiful for you to be a Christian living here in the quietude of this home, but you are not in business, you do not rub against the people I do. My life is an altogether different life." Mr. Zebedee, do you mean to tell Mrs. Zebedee, do you want Mrs. Zebedee to understand, that you are not as true in your business as you are in your home, or as she is in her home; and is that what you wish your boys to understand? Do you wish to inculcate upon them that there is one morality for the home life and another morality for the business life? That it is right for a man to be a different man in different places? If not, then what is the point of comparison between your wife in her home life and you in your business life? I tell you that business without religion is soulless, conscienceless, degrading, and destructive, and God's curse rests on it, just as it rests on the home that is without religion. But I am asked again by the men, "Are you not altogether one-sided in laying



THE SEA OF GALILEE—FISHING SCENE.

all the blame at the door of us men, who are outside of the pale of the church? Must not some one else share the responsibility with us in our non-confession? If, for example, there were more manly men in the pulpits, men of the broad, grand, fearless type which men like and respect, might we not be drawn to confession?" Ah, that is another question, and when you press me with it, I say quickly and readily, Yes. Yes, there ought to be a higher type of men in the pulpit; men broader in every way. I have seen such men in the pulpit, men of large sympathies, men not afraid of thought nor of investigation; fair-minded men, manly men, and every time I have found them in the pulpit I have found men in the pews and men at the communion table. Men do not find enough of manhood in the pulpit to draw them, not enough heroism in sermons to satisfy them. Given a Luther with his manhood back of the truth, with his straightforwardness, his refusal of all compromise, and the result will be men enough won by him to launch and make successful the great Reformation. An old woman in the pulpit is not going to fill the pews with stalwart men.

While I make this admission I press this point also: You have direct access to Christ and can find Him irrespective of the pulpit. Here is His Book, and He is in it. Deal with Him directly. You are not called upon to confess His ministers;

you are only called upon to confess Him. But I must not allow myself to be switched off from my subject and side-tracked. I am dealing with you, and not with delinquent, deficient ministers, and not even with defective overbearing churches. If I were speaking to the churches, I should try and be as true in telling them their duty as I am in telling you your duty. I should tell them to avoid the coercing conscience and all assumed authority. I should tell them not to put man-made creeds between men and Christ. Avoid over-belief as well as under-belief. An over-plus in creed is about as bad as a minus in creed. Get your creed down to a minimum and your grand life up to a maximum. Over-statement of belief produces unbelief. Lift up, exalt, press home the few simples in religion, viz.: the things which are essential, which are believable, usable, workable, and which are absolute and certain, and give hypotheses, and far-fetched deductions, and elaborate theories, and complicated dogmas the go-by. Christianity is life; insist upon that. Emphasize the fact that religion consists not so much in putting restrictions upon a man as putting a noble power into a man to expand him and develop him. See to it that the church meets the live wants of men, and gives them the sympathy and fellowship that are purifying and uplifting. When men can find in a secular brotherhood more "brotherliness by illustration" than they are able to discover in the

Church of Christ, you must expect that these orders and brotherhoods will gain recruits at the expense of the Church. I should say all this and more also to the churches were I talking to them. But I am not now talking to the churches, I am talking to you, and I refuse to be switched off the track.

In dealing with the Zebedee problem it is proper to ascertain just how much of a problem the Zebedee problem is. It is very easy to exaggerate here, to make it out that fewer men have been connected with Christianity than really have been. It is said that Sydney Smith, confronting his Edinburgh congregation, the larger part of which was habitually shawled and bonneted, was wont, as he read the One Hundred and Seventh Psalm, to lay peculiar emphasis and stress on the third word in the refrain: "Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness and His wonderful works to the children of men." Are all congregations like Sydney Smith's congregation? While there have not been as many men connected with the cause of Christ as we could desire, yet there has not been a paucity of men. Christianity has always had men, and men belonging to the very front rank of manhood. It began with men. There are at least four men mentioned in the New Testament to every one woman. Thus it was in the apostolic times; thus it was in sub-apostolic times. The writers of the Bible were all men. And what see we to-day? Our general assemblies, our na-

tional councils, our church congresses, our international associations and conferences, grand substantial bodies of men leading the Church of God and representing Christianity impressibly to everybody. Also our great educational institutions, our colleges and universities founded by Christian men, and manned by Christian men. To-day American statistics show us that a vast majority of the young men in our colleges and universities, the coming leaders of thought, the coming centres of influence in business and statesmanship, and in education, and in jurisprudence, and in our courts and in our churches, are in living and open connection with some branch of the Christian Church. In this Galilean family there were two men to one woman in the Church. It is a mistake to exaggerate the absence of men beyond due proportion; it is unfair to the men, and it is unfair to the Church. It leads the Church to believe that it has no right to expect the men to come into its ranks. Church of God, confirm not the men of the procrastinating spirit in their procrastination by a lack of expectation with regard to them in the performance of their duty. The moment you give it out by word or by example, or by letting them alone, that you do not expect them to respond to your call or join your ranks, that moment you weaken your grip upon men. That moment you concur in their false ideal. The expectation of the Church? There is a mighty power in that.

It surrounds men like an atmosphere. Have you forgotten the thrill in the motto which Nelson signalled all through the British navy on the eve of the great battle? "England expects every man to do his duty!" That expectation of the nation made every man in the British navy a Nelson, and gave England a great victory. The expectation of the Church is educational. It acts outside and it acts inside. It leads us to press the Lord's demands upon men, and it leads men manfully to meet the Lord's demands. Why not the men as well as the women? There is no reason why not; and men to-day are beginning clearly to see this, and are responding by the whole phalanx to the call of the Church. The best men you know are in the Church of God, and there is no good reason why they should not be. They are broad-minded men, they are the searchers after truth, they are the men you want near you in trouble, and they are the men you trust. I was interested lately in reading "The Problem of Jesus," by George Dana Boardman, of Philadelphia, and interested above all in his chief argument for the Christ. What is his chief argument for the Christ? This, viz.: The men whom the Christ has made—the shining men in the shining ranks of the Nazarene. He covers whole pages in his interesting book with nothing but names, the names of men, names gathered from all the higher walks of life where brain and character tell. Every name is like every well-

tuned, sweet-toned instrument in the grand orchestra which sets the walls of the building and the hearts of the audience vibrating with simple strain and thundering chorus.

Passing the college buildings of Cambridge, England, a cynic one day accosted a gentleman coming out of the hallway, and sneeringly asked, "And what do you manufacture here?" The gentleman accosted was one of the professors of the university. Recognizing the sneer and the unbelief in the tones of the voice of the cynic, he replied: "We manufacture power, sir." And he followed his answer with the simple recital of the story of Cambridge University, and with an enumeration of the names of the men it had given England and the world. In this way he literally annihilated the cynicism of the man. He could not have chosen a more effective method of reply. Cambridge University has behind it no less than six centuries filled with its fine industries, and with the minds which it has developed and furnished. From the days of Spenser, Dryden, and Milton, down to Gray, Coleridge, Byron, Wordsworth, and Tennyson, what a procession of scholars has passed out of those portals! Old Ironsides, Oliver Cromwell, once trod these halls; and so did Pitt, and so did Palmerston, and so did Wilberforce, and so did Macaulay. Lord Bacon read by this window, and Herschell by that. It was here that Sir Isaac Newton pondered the problems

of the coming ages, and it was here, too, that Jeremy Taylor and Lightfoot joined themselves to God and fathomed the depths of His Holy Book. Cambridge University is known and honored through her sons.

George Dana Boardman, in his "Problem of Jesus," follows the method of the Cambridge professor. He makes the disciples of Jesus argue for Jesus and prove Him worthy of faith, and love, and honor, and confidence. He points to the men whom Jesus has made; and these are the very best men of history. They are men of character and of large and purified affection. They are men brimful of the finest mentality. They are the leaders of thought and of glorious causes. They are the scientists of the world, the poets, the religionists, the astronomers, the reformers, the educators, the heroes, the philosophers, the philanthropists, the artists, the musicians, the statesmen. Dr. Boardman fairly wearies us with the great burden of great names of the men whom Jesus has made, and then he asks us, "What are you going to do with the problem of Jesus?"

My brother man, the one argument why you should accept of Jesus Christ and ally yourself with Him and with His on-marching cause is Jesus Christ Himself. You want truth; He is the truth. You want purity; He is purity. Men searched His life through and through, but found no fault in Him. They were bitter men who made

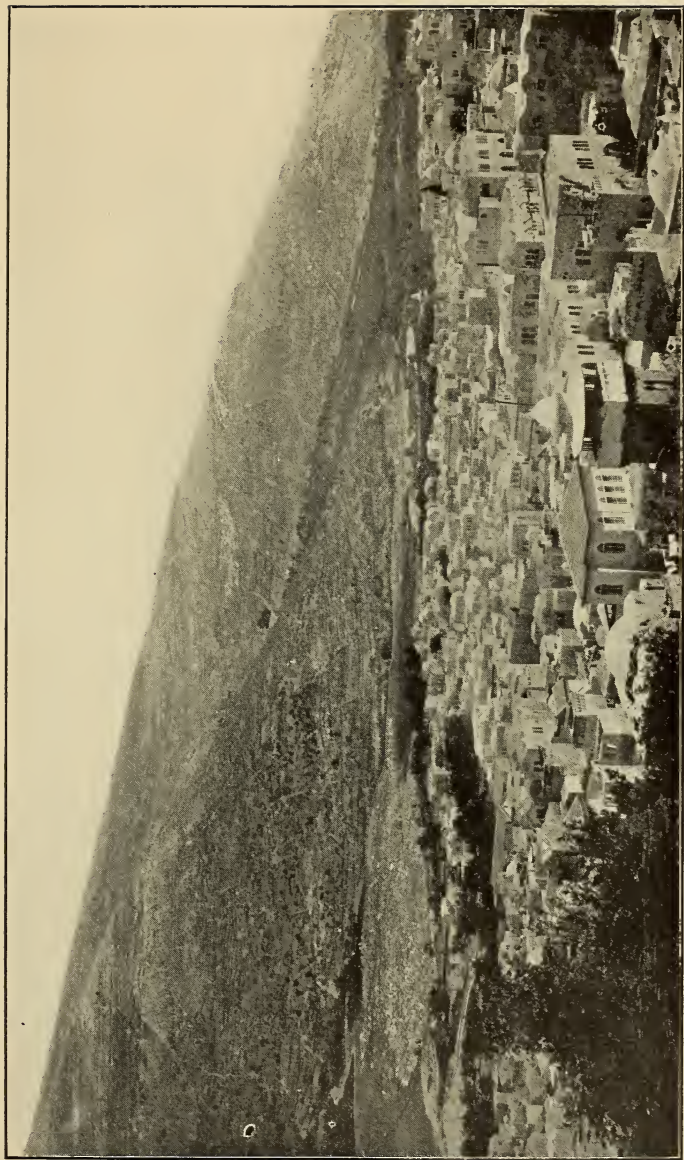
the search, and they wanted to find flaws, but there were no flaws. The man who crucified Him washed his hands before the crowd and said, "I find no fault in Him." The man who betrayed Him cried out in agony, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood." Above all things you claim that you want manhood, manhood to inspire you, manhood after which to pattern, manhood to reproduce, manhood to be proud of; in Him you have manhood in its perfection. His is the finest of fibre. In Him not an attribute of manhood is left out. From Calvary to this present hour the secret of His power has been this: What He is; His full-orbed manhood. Men felt His power when He lived among them. They touched Him, and He touched them on every side; He walked with them, talked with them, ate at their tables, sailed in their fishing-boats, feasted with them, but all the while they felt that there was a grandeur in Him that was not in them. His presence was electric. He made new men of them simply by being with them. See what He did for the rough fishermen of Galilee! He so refined them and enlarged them and filled them with the truth of God that He set them on the thrones of thought to rule the world, and from these thrones of thought they are ruling the world in this latest and most enlightened century. What Christ did for men in the apostolic days He is doing for men to-day: He is bringing them to

their best selves. It is that you may be brought to your best self that I am calling you to Christ. I want all men to come, but especially do I want the men who are at the head of the families in our community to come. I want them to have a God for themselves, and I want them also to have a God whom they can give to their children.

I was reading yesterday the "Song of Moses," which he wrote after the victory of the Red Sea. It is a grand production. In the reading I stopped to ponder this one remarkable phrase which Moses used, viz.: the phrase "My father's God." Did you know that phrase was in that song? It is. It was Moses' joy that his father had a God, and that joy was so great that it compelled expression in this his greatest composition, and on this the greatest occasion of his life. It burst forth into song, and Moses could not prevent it. The fact that his father had a God was counted a blessing equal to the blessing of freedom just bestowed upon the whole nation of Israel, and it had to have a place in the Marseillaise of the Hebrew life. Fathers in the households represented here to-day, are you going to leave your children a God in whom to trust and in whom to rejoice? A God to fill their life with song and with victory? For your child to be able to look up into heaven and say "My God" means much; it is majestic, it stirs his nature to its depths, it brings a great peace and power into his life; but for your child to be able to add

to that address to heaven and say not only "My God," but also "My father's God," that means much more, very much more; it touches the tenderest chord of the human heart. It brings God to the very cradle. It brings God to the fireside of the old homestead. It brings God into the very core of the whole of the home life. There is nothing a man can leave his children equal to God. Husbands and fathers, join your wives and sons in their church life. Let the whole family be in the household of faith; Zebedee, Salome, James, and John! Why not? There is no reason why not.

MOUNT EBAL A VOICE OF GOD.



MOUNT EBAL AND NAPLOUS (SHECHEM).

VI.

MOUNT EBAL A VOICE OF GOD.

“Then Joshua built an altar unto the Lord God of Israel in Mount Ebal.”—JOSHUA viii. 30.

WHEN I last read this Scripture which gives me my text, I read it on the summit of Mount Gerizim. The Bible was before me in the printed page, and the Bible was before me in every feature of the broad landscape. It makes the Bible a new book to read it in its own land. My Gerizim-view of Palestine was the first of those grand hill-top views which keep constantly breaking in upon one's soul, as one rides through the Holy Land. From the summit of Gerizim you can actually see from Pisgah, which lifts its head on the other side of Jordan in the east, to Hermon, which lifts its head in the north. You wonder how Moses, who was never in Canaan, could describe with such accuracy Gerizim and Ebal. Here is the explanation: Their summits were visible from Pisgah. With them before him in the distance, he planned the ceremony of the nation's dedication to God, which Joshua carried out in the vale between these mountains. On the summit of Gerizim I could take in

the whole of the historic side of Mount Ebal, which was directly opposite, and the whole of the historic valley which ran at its base. It required no severe play of imagination to picture the holy scenes portrayed by this Old-Testament Scripture. Down in the centre of the little vale, where we tented at night, was the ark of the covenant, and around it were gathered the priests and Levites. On the slopes of Gerizim were six tribes, a million and a half of people, and on the slopes of Ebal were six tribes, a million and a half of people. There has never been such another congregation gathered together on earth for the worship of God. That congregation stands unrivalled in all history. When the priests turned their faces and looked Gerizimward and uttered the blessings, a million and a half of people responded "Amen." When the priests turned their faces and looked Ebalward and uttered the curses, a million and a half of people responded "Amen." Those responses were like the sound of many waters and like the noise of mighty thunders.

By these solemn scenes God made these two mountains vocal, and ever since each has been a voice of God uttering great moral principles; even those principles which are shaping the destinies of men both for time and for eternity. God compelled the covenant nation to enter the promised land by the gateway which lies between Gerizim and Ebal, and upon these two mountains, which

are visible from all parts of the land, He wrote as upon two pillars these everlasting facts demonstrated by universal history, viz. :

1. Sow the good and you shall reap the good.
2. Sow the evil and you shall reap the evil.

The first principle He wrote upon Gerizim, and the second principle He wrote upon Ebal. The two mountains declare to the whole earth that God blesses and that God curses; and that blessings and curses come according to the conduct of man.

It is popular in selecting a theme from this region of Palestine to select Gerizim as a subject, and to use it as a symbol of the blessings of God. That is right; but that is not the whole of the Christian tourist's duty. Ebal should not be neglected. But for the most Ebal is neglected. Hence to balance things, I select Ebal and not Gerizim. Ebal has its symbolism. There is an antipathy abroad against Ebal. That is wrong. Ebal does not deserve it. Ebal has a mission to serve both Godward and manward, and that mission it nobly performs. My point is this: *Ebal is just as real as Gerizim*. The malediction is abroad in human life just as really as is the benediction. And what is more, *God is just as grand and as praiseworthy in issuing the curses as He is in issuing the blessings*. According to this Scripture an altar should be built on Ebal. Now an altar is for the worship of God.

What arrests my attention is this: God ordered that the first great and national altar for His worship in Canaan should be built on Mount Ebal. An altar on Mount Gerizim! That would not strike us as anything odd or out of the way; it is easy, it is natural to worship God amid benedictions and pleasing gifts. But an altar on Mount Ebal, the mountain of malediction; worship offered to God as the God of the curses; that does strike us as odd, and that does arrest our attention. It, however, is instructive. It lays down this truth, viz.: God is to be worshipped for everything He does, even His anathemas are causes for thanksgiving, and his curses are worthy of praise. The Holy Spirit commands men to rear an altar and worship God for all the dark sayings of His law, which thunder His wrath and strike terror into the guilty conscience; and he bids men thus to sacrifice to God upon Ebal because there is not a curse uttered upon that sacred mountain that is in any way unworthy of God. Christ was as much Christ when He uttered the woes as when He uttered the beatitudes, and He was just as true to the interests of mankind.

That we may become interested in Ebal with its altar, and that we may get some searching thoughts for the day in which we live, let us take up two things for our study, viz.: The history of the altar and the symbolism of the altar.

I. The History of the Altar.

The one point in the history upon which I wish especially to dwell is this: The altar was pre-designed by the Lord Himself. The altar was not a sudden inspiration of Joshua. It was not Joshua's idea at all; it was God's idea. Its plans and specifications had been drawn up more than forty years prior to the day of its erection. God gave the plans to Moses; and among the last things which Moses made emphatic in the hearing of Joshua was the building of this altar. The altar was pre-designed. If you will look over its history, you will find that everything pertaining to it was fore-arranged with great accuracy and with precise minuteness. God was very particular about it. He specified the day it should be erected—the day on which the Hebrews crossed the river Jordan. He specified the exact spot where it should stand. It should stand on Mount Ebal.

The most important thing about the altar on Mount Ebal as a pre-designed work was the way in which it was to be built. This also was specifically indicated. To show this, let me quote from the plans and specifications. The plans read thus: "There shalt thou build an altar unto the Lord thy God of stones; thou shalt not lift any iron tool upon them; thou shalt build the altar of the Lord thy God of whole stones." "Thou shalt not build it of hewn stones, for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it." "This is peculiar," you say. Yes, it is. But it is instructive. Its object

is to lead the Hebrews to recognize that in their relations with God in the item of salvation, they cannot give, but only receive; they cannot design, but only execute. The lesson taught is the lesson of subordination to God upon the part of man. The essential fact enunciated is that God is the sole Author of the order of worship and of the system of truth which should guide men in their worship. My fellow-men, we must take our conceptions of God from God Himself. Unless our conceptions of Him be true and right, our worship will necessarily be defective.

That He should be the Author of the order of worship and of the system of truth seems to be nothing but common sense, when we remember our ignorance of Him and recall the fact that truth is not innate in us, but must be revealed to us.

I take great comfort from the fact that God instructs us in this matter, and that He explicitly directs us. Were it otherwise, we should be all at sea. What rest and confidence could we have in worship if God had not given us laws governing us in worship? That you may see the rest and confidence which the appointment of God gives in worship, take this one point. Look at the inequality of worshippers as you see them in the old Hebrew tabernacle! Some are rich and some are poor. Some can offer hundreds of bullocks, and still have large herds left; others never owned a bullock and never will. If there were no divine

regulation, what would the poor man do? Could he stand by the side of the rich and offer his humble gift from his small means without harrowing misgivings as to its acceptance? Dare he put a pigeon or a turtle-dove by the side of his rich neighbor's bullock, and feel that when the two offerings were put into the balances of heaven the scales would be in exact poise? Uninstructed, he dare not; but instructed, he dare. When God arranges our worship, such perplexing questions as the inequalities of gifts are settled. The case of the poor is provided for as accurately as the case of the rich, and in the divine arrangement God proves that He is no respecter of persons. If there be a willing mind, He accepts according to that a man hath. In the balances of heaven a conversation in a garret by the bedside of a pauper may outweigh the greatest sermon before the noblest audience. The timid tinkle of a widow's mite may be heard further in heaven, and may make sweeter music in the ear of God than the loud ring of the millionaire's golden coin. A turtle-dove, and a measure of flour, and a wafer baked on the fire-plate of the poor are as acceptable to God as the finest of the herd offered by the rich.

Now, if we are dependent upon God for a revelation, it is only a trite thing for me to say that this revelation must come wholly from God, and must be accepted absolutely, and must be implicitly followed by man. Clear as this may seem, man is

not willing to submit in actual life to God's revelation. He arrogates to himself the right to revise God's work, and he imagines that his revision is a vast improvement upon God's original. See man as he deals with this altar of God's planning! There is the altar built of rough, uncouth boulders, without symmetry or regularity, without artistic beauty or attractiveness. Man says to himself, "This will never do; there are possibilities of beauty and symmetry here, and the whole work must be reshaped. Every stone must be submitted to my chisel and mallet, and must be polished and beautified, and made to fit and to square. My innate consciousness of the fitness of things is offended; it dictates a change, and its dictation must be observed, for my innate consciousness is the highest known authority." Pointing to his works, he says, "Behold how I have brought beauty and order and grandeur out of the crude elements of nature! Look at my temple, a gem of art! And at my mansion, and at my monumental pillar! This altar must be submitted to me as these have been."

Confident of his own skill, he takes his mallet and chisel and begins the work of reconstruction. But every time his mallet drives the chisel into the stone, every time a corner is chipped off, every time an angle is rounded, God's voice cries, "Thou hast polluted mine altar!" An altar of man's designing is worse than no altar. It is a polluted

thing in God's sight. A system of doctrine built after man's ideal is a bold and open rejection of God's system, and is far worse than a mere blank : it is a polluted thing in God's sight. An order of worship substituted in place of God's order is worse than no order. It is a polluted thing in God's sight. According to the divine *ipse dixit* of this Scripture everything in the religious life, in doctrine and in practice, which has not as its warrant a "Thus saith the Lord," or its equivalent, as a basis, is a polluted thing in God's sight.

We are living in an age when men are altogether too free with God's prerogatives; when they too easily set Him aside, and substitute for His appointments their own fancies and conceptions. If it be true, as we find it in this Scripture, that God demands men to worship Him and to believe in Him according to His revelation, and that He is so particular that He tells them they shall not even touch or change a single stone in His altar, then it is our duty to give this fact prominence, and to run it up before men mountain high. Then it is our duty to insist upon its recognition. This only is the safety of the Church. This only is the way to secure acceptance with God.

The duty of the hour which God has laid upon the Church is to make her theological artificers, and sculptors, and lapidaries understand that there are divine laws under which they must work.

They must build with the stones of truth just as God has given them, whether these be angular, or globular, or conical, or cubic; whether they be massive or diminutive, porphyritic or sedimentary, terrestrial or selenic. Especially must they be made to understand the restrictions of their trade, when they come to deal and work with the stones on Mount Ebal. It is these stones that are not to their mind. The stones found on Mount Gerizim they are willing to use without subjecting them to their chisel. These are some of the stones of Gerizim which they accept, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." "God shall wipe away all tears from all eyes." "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." These stones are to their mind. But while they accept the stones of Gerizim and build with them without hammer and chisel, they will not accept of the stones of Ebal and build with them without hammer and chisel. It is wonderful what changes they do make upon the stones of Ebal by their skilful chipping. When they have reduced them to uniformity of size, and to the regularity of the cube, you would not recognize them. Let me illustrate:

A friend of mine in New Jersey writes: "I once found a stone upon Mount Ebal, and being perplexed by it, I sent it to my neighbor. It was this stone: 'And these shall go away into everlasting

punishment.' My neighbor did not know what to do with it. It was not to his liking and he could not make it to his liking. Finally the happy thought came to him to send it to a famous religious lapidary, who works in one of the theological seminaries, and who makes a specialty of working upon these stones as his only trade. He did send it, and this workman worked upon it, and returned it as beautiful as a beautiful ode. He thought that no man in his senses could teach that it meant just what it said. It was a poetic conception of great merit, and of great beauty to any one who had poetic receptivity." But was my Jersey friend satisfied? No. Why not? Because he reasoned thus: If this verse of Scripture, "these shall go away into everlasting punishment," be not a fact but only a poetic fiction, then its companion verse of Scripture must also be no fact, but a poetic fiction, viz., "The righteous shall go into life everlasting." To be consistent you must poetize all around. Ah! this is the trouble, and this always will be the trouble. The same skilful exegetical stroke which strikes the reality out of the world below strikes the reality out of the world above.

I have given you the experience of my friend from New Jersey, let me now give my own experience. It was in connection with a famous theological lapidary in the city of New York. This celebrated divine gave a course of Sabbath even-

ing lectures upon the apostles of our Lord. Peter and James and John were stones from Gerizim, and were easily handled. But Judas Iscariot, he was a regular Ebal boulder, of the toughest and most unimpressible kind. The lecture upon Judas Iscariot was the lecture I went to hear. I was curious to witness the reputed ascension of Judas to the skies. The lecturer of course put him up there. He built a magnificent heavenly palace for Judas out of rhetoric and imagination. No mansion could be grander. He made it out to his own satisfaction, that because Judas was the greatest sinner, therefore his salvation would be the grandest exhibit of God's glorious grace. Then he dwelt upon the repentance and confession of Judas, and declared that "any kind of sorrow on account of sin meant eternal life." Rhetorically considered it was a beautiful heavenly mansion which he constructed. But when he finished it, and when it stood forth in its grandeur and completeness, I saw two bolts from God's word strike it, and they struck it full and fair on the base. These bolts were hurled by the hand of divine truth. When the great cloud of smoke and dust had passed away, and the flying débris had settled, and the atmosphere had become clear, I looked, and there was not one stone of the beautiful mansion left upon another. One of the bolts which struck the fabric was this: "Godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repenteth

of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death." It is not true that any kind of sorrow for sin means eternal life; the sorrow of the world on account of sin means death. This was the Judas type of sorrow. The other bolt was this: "The Son of man goeth as it is written of him; but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed; it had been good for that man had he never been born." Of no soul that ever reached heaven with its indescribable glories could it be truthfully said, "it had been good for that man had he never been born." When we begin to trim the stones of Ebal, and to build with the trimmed stones, the result always is, we have a false theology, and a false worship, and a false life. We may admire our own work, but God cries down from heaven, "Thou hast polluted mine altar." When we begin to make excuses for Judas Iscariot, and to palliate his crime, and to transfigure his life, and represent his ultimate destiny as one and the same with that of John and Peter and the good apostles, we put a premium upon treason, and inevitably multiply Judases in human society. Would you like to go out of life a Judas Iscariot? God has put the great and high mountain of Ebal between man and evil, and it is a crime against God and against the human race to lower that mountain even by so little as the removal of a single pebble.

But I must now take up my second point, viz. :

II. The Symbolism of the Altar of Ebal.

What is the great fact which this altar symbolizes? It is this:

God is to be worshipped for His words and deeds of judgment. "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy; all nations shall come and worship thee, for thy judgments are made manifest."—Rev. xv. 4.

I know that the human mind is prejudiced against the judgments of God. I know that exception is taken to the Bible because these are found written therein. I know that God is spoken against because of these. This is the reason I deal with this subject and proclaim that God is to be worshipped because of these. This is the reason I advocate building an altar upon Mount Ebal.

Let me set in order my reasons for holding that God should be worshipped for His words and deeds of judgment.

1. My first reason is: God's dark words and deeds of judgment are needed and wholesome warnings.

We value the promises of God and call them golden; we should also value the warnings of God and call them golden. The warnings are born of God's love just as surely as the promises are. Every warning of God is infinite love itself walking before man as a guide to point out the horrible pits into which men are liable to fall, and to fence the yawning precipices over which men are

liable to walk. In a certain sense there is no difference between God's warnings and promises. Every warning is a veiled promise. It says to man, "Avoid this way and I assure you that you shall walk safely." Every Scripture warning is a lighthouse of God built on the rocks of perdition. We know the worth of lighthouses, and at what cost they are erected. We know the honor given those who design them. The architect of the Eddystone lighthouse will always live in history. Now what is every lighthouse out on the perilous rocks of ocean? It is only a curse of Ebal crying amid the dangers of ocean, "Woe to the ship that strikes this rock." And yet is there not a promise flung out into the darkness in every beam of light that flashes from the lighthouse lamp? Does not every ray carry a blessing to the storm-tossed mariner? There are voices in the flashing beams of the lighthouse lamp, saying, "While here there is danger and death, out yonder there is safety, out yonder there is life."

The service which the curse of God renders man will bear investigation. It says that God is interested in man and desires his well-being. The curse is God's lance by which he means to cut away all unsoundness from our moral nature and arrest corruption. The curse is God's chart which brings before us the rocks and shoals in our course over the sea of life. It exposes the nature of sin and explodes the theories of falsehood. The curse

is the voice of divine mercy crying, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die!" Those who have fallen under the judgment of sin can tell us of the value of God's warning. Why did Dives in his torments ask Abraham to send one from the dead to visit his brethren on earth? This was the reason and the only reason: that this messenger might cry the warnings and repeat the anathemas. Those who have heeded the voice of God can tell us of the value of God's warning uttered in the curse. Let Nineveh speak. A denunciation of God saved that empire city. How accessible God has made salvation when man can enter it even through the door of a curse as the thousands of Nineveh did? It is not the curse of God that we should denounce, but it is man's unbelieving treatment of the curse.

My fellow-men, we need the curses of God with their warnings, and we shall need them so long as the dark realities of human history continue to repeat themselves; and so long as sin continues to operate and to produce woes. Is it true that angels have lost their first estate? Is it true that Eden has become a wreck? Is it true that the Dead Sea rolls its sullen waters over the sites of the great cities of the plain? Is it true that ancient Jerusalem is a heap of ashes and buried strata deep out of sight? Is it true that the river Nile, which makes Egypt golden with a yellow harvest, once ran blood under the judgment of

God? Is it true that there are sin-wrecked men walking the streets of New York carrying in their soul a future which is a terror to themselves? Is it true that the wages of sin is death? If so, then we need the curses of God against every form of iniquity to warn us in time, and to ward us off from the inevitable consequences of sin. There ought to be no trifling with sin, nor with the awful destiny into which it inducts.

2. God should be praised for His words and deeds of judgment because these appeal to and use the element of fear in our nature for the purpose of securing our safety.

There is a popular prejudice against appealing to fear. Advanced pulpiteers of to-day deprecate it with all their might. They plainly tell us that they have no confidence in Christians who are frightened to Christ. They declare that we have gotten away from the age when men can be driven into heaven by terror. That was a characteristic of Calvin's age, and Edwards' age, and Whitefield's age. They say, "We do not preach the doctrines of Edwards or of Whitefield." True. But neither do they move their audiences as Edwards did; neither do they preach to the thousands as Whitefield did. Their sole cry is: "Move man by love." But what of the wrath to come, of which Paul speaks when he says, "Knowing the terrors of the law we persuade men to flee from the wrath which is to come."

In neglecting to use the element of fear, these teachers lose much. To me salvation is so important that I feel justified in appealing to everything in man that I may move him to accept of salvation. To decry fear is one way of casting reflection upon God, who put fear in man upon the day of creation, and who appealed to it and used it while man was in Eden in the state of innocence. The very first recorded words of God to the human race were words addressed to fear: "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

Fear is a faculty, a talent, which belongs to man. It is one of God's grand gifts. We should be miserably constructed if we did not have it. We should be pierced by a thousand pains and injuries which we now escape. Fear plays a wide and a useful part in our lives. Look at it in the child, which God has put into your hands for safe-keeping! In your child's education there is nothing to which you appeal so frequently as to its fear, and this appeal is the strongest evidence of your love. By an appeal to fear you teach it to avoid the fire, and the burning lamp, and the blazing gas-jet. By an appeal to fear you teach it to let the sharp knife alone. By an appeal to fear you teach it to keep away from the steep stairs. Your child has been born into a world of dangers, and your education of it is full of warnings, and every one of these is the embodiment of love. This being so, what a contradiction of every-day

life is this cry against the appeal of fear when preaching the Gospel to lost sinners? What sheer nonsense it is! There can be no full spiritual instruction without it. When all eternity hangs upon this brief life which we are living, and when thousands upon thousands are sinning away their day of grace, it would be gross barbarism and cruelty not to sound the alarm, and not to arouse the fears of the thoughtless. The preacher of to-day, like the preacher of old, must stand in the midst of humanity and must ring out the same old identical words: "Let us therefore fear lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it."

I hold that we are to use love or fear in accordance with the conditions of the men with whom we deal. In Nineveh we should cry: "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed." In Philadelphia we should cry: "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of God." That is the way and that the method we employ in everyday life.

Let me put two cases before you and ask you for your judgment. The first case: In one of our New England villages a father was coming up the street from his store to his home for dinner. He thought he heard the voice of his baby girl calling him, "Papa! Papa!" Lifting his eyes toward the roof of his house, there she was on the eaves of the roof, with her hands outstretched toward her fa-

ther. She had climbed up on a table and had crawled out through the window and along the roof. From her high place she spied her father walking up the street, and called his name and was ready to toss herself into his arms. She thought she could do this; she knew no better. What a sight to meet a father's eye! At the window appeared the mother as pale as death. She held in her hands a tempting orange, and putting into her voice all the sweetest tones of winning love she could command she called the child by name and kept offering it the tempting bait until the little one crept to her and was safely folded in her arms and kissed. That was love-saving. The second case: The granite mills of Fall River were in flames. On the roof of the burning house there appeared a lone woman calling wildly for help. She had fled from the flames below, and was safe now, but her safety was only for a few moments. The spectators saw this. They saw what she could not see, the flames leaping up the rear of the building to the very roof. They saw the inevitable crash of roof and all. Spreading a strong canvas before the building, and pointing to the flames that were sweeping toward the imperilled one, with united voice they cried to her: "Leap, quick, or you will miss your only chance!" Under the impulse of fear, which was intensified by the earnest cry of the spectators, she did leap and was saved. That was fear-saving. The two

cases are before you; now, what have you to say? You say: We approve of both. In the first case love was the proper motive to sway the child, and in the second case fear was the proper motive to sway the endangered woman. You would discount any man's judgment who would prate against the course of the crowd in making their appeal to the woman. All I have to say is that we ought to bring into the sphere of religion the good judgment which sways us in the affairs of every-day life. In every-day life we act on certainties and not upon mere conjectures. We act upon what we know, and not upon what we do not know. We act under the impulse of fear, as well as under the impulse of love. We let the honest warning sway us as well as the loving promise. Thus it is in our secular life; thus it ought to be in our spiritual life.

I take this position, that whatever is in harmony with that which God put into human nature when He sent it forth from His hand perfect, whatever is calculated to reach and develop it, is right and needed. We know that there is an affinity between certain medicines and foods and certain organs and parts of the human body. This makes it beneficial and necessary that certain foods and certain medicines shall be used. Their use is demanded by the life and health of the body. As it is with the body, so is it with the soul. God has built it up out of such elements as these, joy, hope,

love, conscience, fear. Between these elements and certain forms of truth there is a strong affinity. The promises appeal to hope and feed it, and make it the spring of action. The commandments, the statements of duty, appeal to the conscience and move it. The story of the cross with its wonderful illustration of sacrifice appeals to love and moves man through love. The curses pronounced against sin, the threatenings, the warnings, these appeal to fear and move man through it. If it be right to use the commandments, and the promises, and the story of the cross, in order to move man to accept of salvation; if it be right to appeal to these because God has put these elements in the soul and has given truth in forms that have affinities for these elements, then it is right also to use fear and appeal to it in order to move man, for God has put fear into the soul and has given us truth in a form adapted to fear.

I close with a simple illustrative story. In a lonely valley in Scotland, at the base of a tall cliff, there lies a huge rock, which once fell from the face of the precipice. It is worn and seamed by the action of time. A shepherd was passing, when suddenly the finger of God touched it, and rent it from its ancient bed in the mountain-side. Touched by the finger of God, it came leaping and bounding from pinnacle to pinnacle, and fell where it rests to-day. The shepherd who was beneath it then is beneath it now, ground to powder. What

would not a warning have been to that shepherd! A timely warning, appealing to the element of fear in him, would have been a messenger of love, saving him from his awful death.

Like that man, we are in awful danger. God sees our danger, and feels it as no one else can. So in love He has reared Mount Ebal, and from its lofty summit He sends through the human world His saving cry of warning: "Turn ye! Turn ye! for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

A HEBREW IDYL, OR A STUDY OF
THE BOOK OF RUTH.



A GLEANER FROM THE HARVEST FIELD OF BOAZ.

VII.

A HEBREW IDYL, OR A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF RUTH.

"So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, with her . . . and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest."—RUTH i. 22.

THE people of God possess a treasure in the little book of Ruth. It is valuable for many reasons.

The book is valuable because it gives us one important link in the genealogy of Jesus Christ. Ruth was one of the three Gentile mothers admitted into the line of Christ's humanity. It is interesting to trace how the different streams of humanity run into the ancestry of Jesus Christ. Here the sinful life of Tamar flows through it. Yonder the life of Rahab the Jerichoite. Yonder the life of Bath-sheba. Here the life of Ruth. Different elements of humanity entered into His ancestral line; so He is not the Son of one nation, but the Son of many nations. He had Gentile mothers and sisters and brothers, as well as Jewish mothers and sisters and brothers. He is a man of the human race.

To be made a mother of Jesus, even though a

far-away mother, was to be crowned with one of the highest honors which God could bestow upon womanhood. It was to be made a sharer of the blessedness which was pronounced upon Mary, the blessed among women. Every one of the far-away mothers in the Messianic line was as essential to the humanity of Christ as was Mary herself. The high honor of being one of the mothers of Jesus was the honor which God conferred upon Ruth, the Moabitess, as a reward for her devotion to one of God's people, and as a result of her whole-hearted consecration to God Himself. The book of Ruth, first of all, helps to complete the links in the genealogical chain of Christ. Without a complete genealogy, it would be impossible to prove the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth. Anything, therefore, that helps to establish this is vital and essential and fundamental.

The book of Ruth is valuable for the moral influence which it originates among men. It sets before men that which is best in human nature and makes it attractive. It places before us the highest ideals, and brings us under their assimilating power. By means of it, Naomi and Ruth communicate to us that which is best in them. They make us sympathetic. They help us to see God's overruling hand in the affairs of every-day life. They breathe into us the spirit of gratitude amid the bounties of life, and the spirit of courage amid the difficulties of life. They make us feel

that the right will always be rewarded. So thrilling is their experience, so completely does it touch us and move us in the best attributes of our nature, that it is a means of sanctification to us. It drives meanness out of us, and substitutes generosity and large-heartedness and open-handedness. It educates us in appreciating and admiring the tender, and the noble, and the sublime, and the God-like. Anything that stirs our moral nature to its depths, and makes us ashamed of our selfishness, and gruffness, and cruelty of disposition; anything that begets within us wishes for the higher traits of character, and calls out purposes of sacrifice for God and for others; anything that originates within us an iron resolution to give rein to that which is best in us is of incomparable worth, and should be esteemed a divine blessing. The little book of Ruth does this. It inspires our daughters to be as Naomi and Ruth, grand women; and it inspires our sons to be as Boaz, men every inch of them, frank and chaste and industrious; considerate as employers, honest in business, careful of the rights of others; above taking advantage of the ignorant; ardent as lovers, and faithful as husbands.

The book has a literary value. It is a gem in literature. If we could trace back all the after gems which genius has given to the world and which have inspired the lives of men, we should doubtless discover that some influence begotten

by this early gem originated them, either directly or indirectly. As a gem, there is no artistic elaboration in its style. There is no effort at fine writing; but it is fine writing. The story writes itself. No whip is laid to the imagination to impart gleam and lustre to it. The composition is clear and simple and transparent. Its setting, too, in the canon of Scripture is in its favor. Its location heightens it by means of contrast, just as the lowering black thunder-storm sweeping up the horizon in the west sets off by contrast the summit of the mountain in the east which is all on fire with the light of the sun. "To one who reads the Bible in course, the book of Ruth comes like a sudden yet sweet surprise. The sterner feelings of his nature have been roused by the turbulent scenes of the book of Judges. Fierce battles, private murders, and terrific slaughters have followed each other in rapid succession. One of the last scenes that he dwelt upon was the violent death of an unchaste woman, whose dismembered body was sent in bleeding fragments throughout the land, like the fiery cross of Scotland to call men to arms. This was followed by the slaughter of a hundred thousand men. From such a succession of horrors, the reader comes upon the simple and gentle story of Ruth, like one who emerges from an Alpine gorge black with thunder clouds and filled with the roar of mad torrents, upon a little green pasturage slumbering in the embrace

of the hills, where the sun shines, and the bells of the flock tinkle, and the brook sings its song."

The book has an historic value. It holds up a light in the midst of the nation of Israel in the times of the Judges. It brings out one aspect of the times, viz.: the religious feeling. For, notwithstanding the public corruption in certain of the tribes, there was a religious feeling pervading the nation as a body politic. Like the order of the Nazarite, and the song of Deborah, and the prayer of Hannah, it reveals the reign of religion in the homes of the people. It leads us to this discovery, which no Bible student should overlook in the study of the book of the Judges, viz.: The book of Judges, in order to teach the bitterness of sin, sets forth with great fulness the evils and servitude which prevailed in different sections of Israel, but it passes over with a simple mention the periods of prosperity and fidelity during the times of the Judges; yet these periods were three times as long as the periods of evil and servitude. During at least three-fourths of the two hundred years and more covered by the period of the Judges, the vast majority of homes in Israel were God-fearing homes. They were like the home introduced by the book of Ruth. Elimelech and Boaz were types of the larger part of the manhood of the nation, and Naomi was a type of the larger part of the womanhood of the nation.

In this Hebrew home we see a representation

of every virtue required in the domestic and social life of man. It redounds to the glory of the God of Israel, that in the freedom in which His people were living during the period of the Judges, there was so much chastity, and justice, and love, and propriety, and etiquette. "Who were Naomi and Ruth and Boaz? They were peasants. Yet how charming their eloquence, how pleasing their manners, and how full of wisdom and judgment they are!"

In opening the contents of the book of Ruth, we will present :

I. THE STORY OF THE BOOK.

The story is easily told. It is this: In the days of the Judges there was a severe famine in Judea. It was keenly felt in thousands of homes, but in one especially—the home of Elimelech. The thought came to him to flee from want by moving over the blue mountains, which he could see in the far distance, to the plains beyond, in the land of Moab. His thought became a purpose, and his purpose became an act. He found himself in Moab, with Naomi, his wife, and Mahlon and Chilion, his sons. Ten years fled by; but they were years crowded with sad changes. Only the widowed Naomi lived through them. First her husband died, and then her two sons, who had married Moabitish maidens. Stricken by a treble

sorrow, she was left a stranger in a strange land. She was one of those who could say to God, "All Thy waves and all Thy billows have gone over me."

Naomi in Moab had not forgotten Palestine; she carried her fatherland and her early home in her heart. In her sorrow she determined to go back to these, and when she communicated her purpose to Orpah and Ruth, the widows of her lamented sons, they determined to go with her. These three widows were bound together by peculiar bonds. They had bent over the same sick-bed, and had moved in the same funeral procession, and had wept over the same grave.

On the way to Judea, Naomi, overpowered with the thought that she was leading these two young women away from home and into poverty, stopped and urged them to return to their ancestors. It would be a lonely journey without them, but how could she ask them to share her dark future? She pictured for them a new and a possible home in Moab, and prayed, "The Lord grant you that ye may find rest each of you in the home of her husband." What a beautiful ideal she had of home! It is only a wanderer who can talk or write ideally about home, sweet home. Home according to her ideal is a rest. There is something radically wrong in the home which is not a rest. Home is a rest; a rest for the husband, a rest for the wife, a rest for the children.

The proposal of Naomi was a test to Orpah and Ruth. She dealt with her daughters-in-law as Christ dealt with the man who hastily declared, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." Jesus turned to him and said, "The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the son of man hath not where to lay his head." Every man who becomes a Christian is tried and tempted in some such way. He comes to a pivotal moment in his life, and upon it everything in the future depends. In this pivotal moment he is called upon to balance the reasons for the rejection of the world and for the acceptance of Christ, for leaving Moab and going to Canaan. God tests us to see if we ring true, or if we ring hollow. Can you stand the test of God, O immortal soul?

Orpah failed to stand the test. Like the citizen from the City of Destruction, who accompanied Christian part way to the Celestial city, she turned back with regrets and tears.

Ruth stood the test; and this is the fact which the book makes prominent. It sets before us her devotion and her reward. The more she was urged to leave, the more she clung. Her devotion, under the test, grew until it broke forth into a passionate and soul-stirring resolution, which she sealed with a solemn and self-imposed oath. In her resolution she made five distinct choices, and these five distinct choices we all make when we truly become Christians. These choices are: the Chris-

tian's God, the Christian's pathway, the Christian's companions, the Christian's habitation, and the Christian's death.

When Naomi heard Ruth's resolution, she ceased to urge her to return to Moab; "And so they two went, until they came to Bethlehem."

Entering Bethlehem was a trying scene to Naomi. The past rushed in upon her and overwhelmed her. Old friends gathered around her by the score and scanned her face, and in surprise at the changes which had come over her, asked, "Is this Naomi?" Those who had known her as a bride, and then as a mother, scarce knew her now as a widow. She was so bent and wrinkled and gray. It was when she read the change which had come over her, by reading the looks of surprise and pity on the countenances of her early associates, that she said, "Call me not Naomi, *i.e.*, the pleasantness of the Lord, but call me Mara, *i.e.*, Bitterness; for the Lord hath dealt bitterly with me. I have changed into another person; call me therefore by another name." It is a good thing sometimes to go back to our associates of early days, that we may be made to feel the changes that have come upon us. We can see the difference between our present and former selves, in their unconcealed surprises. If we have grown better, we will recognize that in their looks of admiration; if we have grown worse we will be made to feel that by their looks of disappointment.

It was fortunate that these widows reached Bethlehem during barley harvest. According to the law of the land, they had the privilege of gleaning in the fields. Ruth, ready-handed and willing-hearted, at once went forth to glean, and God guided her to fields where she not only succeeded in securing some of the grain of the fields, but where she succeeded in securing the owner of the fields. By divine guidance, she entered both the field and the heart of Boaz. The first day of gleaning was a grand success. It rejoiced both Ruth and Naomi. When the story of the day was told, Naomi recognized in Boaz an old kinsman. The success of the first day was again and again repeated. Ruth and Boaz met and talked, and met and talked, and the shuttle of respectful feeling shot and reshot between them, and wove the web of love.

In the mean while, the brain of Naomi was not sleeping. She studied both Ruth and Boaz, and she knew exactly how heart responded to heart. There is an immense amount of Naomi in the book. She is so largely in it that the book might with propriety be called the "Book of Naomi." Naomi knew that Boaz was a backward man; for if he had not been backward, the world would not have found him at his time of life a man without a wife. Reading his heart, and pitying his backwardness, she inaugurated a bold plan to usher in his marriage day. As a kinsman, the law of the

Hebrews opened a direct way for him to enter into marriage with Ruth, and the plan of Naomi was to set the law at work.

The story hastens to a conclusion. The law worked well. The mother-in-law saw this one day, when Ruth returned from a walk with Boaz with the whole story written on her face. As she came up to her, Naomi greeted her with the question, "Who art thou, my daughter?" And Ruth answered her in accordance with the spirit of her question, and told her who she was likely to be. In the original Hebrew there is wit in the question not seen in our English translation. "Who art thou, my daughter?" means, "Art thou Mistress Ruth Mahlon," or "Art thou Mistress Ruth Boaz?" Naomi was an old lady, but she was keen and wide awake. She was a woman of strong points all around.

The book closes with Boaz making Ruth his wife, and with the whole family rejoicing over the child Obed. Around this child all centre: Naomi, the grandmother; Boaz, the father; Ruth, the mother. Even the neighbors gather to the rejoicing, and with Naomi and Ruth bless the Lord that the day of storm closes with a sunset of brilliant glory.

With the story of the book before us, we are ready to take up:

II. THE THEME WHICH THE STORY ILLUSTRATES.

The story illustrates this theme: The value and mission of our human loves: or our earthly relationships a medium of mutual helpfulness. There are three points presented by the book illustrating this theme:

1. Life may be made beautiful and filled with comfort and influence by loving relationships. The history of human loves in this book establishes this point. Its friendships have taken hold of the heart of the world, and have repeated themselves in varied forms in far-away lands. The world is always better for those who love, and who leave behind them deeds and memories of love. The friendship between Ruth and Naomi is valuable in that it takes up the lowest relationship of life, and reveals how mutually helpful love makes it, and what a sphere it can open for the play of love. What relationship is esteemed less than that of mother-in-law? In modern life it is the subject of criticism and wit and satire. It has called out the bitterest and most unkind of all caricatures. The friendship between Naomi and Ruth exhibits the opportunity which even this relationship affords for building up a beautiful character and for rendering true service to immortal souls.

Look narrowly at what this friendship gave the world. It gave the world two beautiful charac-

ters. We do not know which to admire most—Naomi or Ruth; the model mother-in-law or the dutiful daughter-in-law. I suppose mothers-in-law admire Ruth, and daughters-in-law admire Naomi. There is no question about the worth of Ruth. But let us not forget that it was Naomi who made Ruth. If Naomi had not been what she was, Ruth would not have been what she was. Both of the daughters-in-law loved her; so she must have been lovable. Orpah could not leave her without many tears and kisses, and Ruth could not leave her at all. Ruth's devotion is a beautiful testimony to Naomi's fidelity and unselfishness. A testimony like this all mothers-in-law should strive to have. The Naomi of to-day may and should have her Ruth. Give me a Naomi who will talk her daughter-in-law up until the community is filled with her praises; give me a Naomi who deals in prayers for her daughter-in-law; give me a Naomi who takes an interest in her daughter-in-law's home and comfort and prosperity; give me a Naomi who is so self-forgetful and condescending that she will even take care of her daughter-in-law's little Obed—and I will point you to a Ruth by her side full of devotion and of love. Age gives the mother-in-law the right to lead in the exercise of love and sacrifice and good feeling.

The book presents a second point, viz. :

2. Loving relationships afford a sphere in which

to do religious work. Naomi, whose character was rooted in religion, did effective work for God. She brought Ruth into the covenant of salvation. Ruth knew nothing of Jehovah before she met Naomi; she was her spiritual mother. Through Naomi the religion of God reached her heart. It was love in the relationship that made religion a power and gave force to Naomi's words. It is love back of words that always makes them a power. Even the words of a child are powerful when they are addressed to one who loves and who is related to it. Let me illustrate. One of England's popular lecturers was speaking on "Personal Influence." Pointing to a little girl in her father's arms, he said, "Every one has an influence; even that child is no exception." "That's true!" cried the father. At the close of the evening, he went to the lecturer and apologized for the interruption. "I could not help speaking, sir. I was a drunkard once, and my little child saved me. I took her with me once to the drink-hall, and, hearing a noise within, she pleaded with me: 'Father, do not go in.' I told her to hold her peace. 'Please, father, do not go in.' 'Hold your peace, I say!' Presently I felt a hot tear from the child's eye fall upon my cheek. I could not go a step farther, sir. I turned around and went home, and I have not touched the glass since. When you said that the child had an influence, I could not help speaking aloud, 'That's true.'" The story

is simple, but it illustrates our point, viz. : Relationship gives power to personal influence, and makes the Christian an effective worker. What was it that made the request and tear of that child so powerful? Were they powerful because the child was a stranger? The very opposite. That child belonged to that father. Nature had bound it to him by a thousand invisible bonds, until the union between him and it was so intimate that its fears sent a shudder through his frame, and its desire moved his intellect and conscience and affection toward sobriety.

How did Naomi bring her religion to Ruth? She did not carry in her hand the roll of the Hebrew law and prophets; she did what was better—she carried it in her character. The spirit of the holy Book was in her heart, and she taught by her life. No doubt she told the stories of Israel's wonderful history, and stated and explained the doctrines of her religion; but it was her life that made her God and her people attractive. It was her life that led Ruth to say, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." Striking as this illustration given us by the book of Ruth is, there are many parallels in God's word showing the sphere which relationships open for effective religious work. There is the story of Moses and Hobab, his brother-in-law. Moses said to him, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."

Hobab responded to the invitation, and dwelt among the blessings. There is the story of Andrew bringing his brother Peter to Jesus. It is a notable fact that many of the apostles were related by the ties of nature, and were bound together by human loves. It is a notable fact also that the Church of Christ to-day is made up of the children of believers and of those who have been born in Christian households. It is a notable fact that many a man is held to faith in the Christian religion simply by the holy character of a godly parent or of a godly friend. Holy characters are the heavenly clusters from the heavenly vines, which make it possible for us to believe in the heavenly Canaan.

One point more with reference to the theme of the book:

3. Religion gives greater love and permanency to our relationships. Our religion makes our friendships and loves as eternal as itself. Love, which is the soul of friendship, is the fruit of religion. "By this shall ye know that ye are my disciples: if ye love one another." "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." God did not come between Naomi and Ruth as a barrier to separate them; their friendship reached its perfection only when Ruth said, "Thy God shall be my God." Religion links us together more firmly, because it brings us into a new com-

munity of interests, and because it makes each interest a uniting bond. Each doctrine is a bond. Each promise is a bond. Each similar experience is a bond. We who are in the Christian faith are bound together by a graduated scale of bonds, until we reach the perfection of unity in the bond of the Spirit.

When we form our friendships under the sanction of religion, we choose our companions for eternity. Human love with religion is a grace of eternity. It is an immortal link, as strong in the heavenly future as it is in the earthly present. In heaven we do not lose sight of our friends. No. Transformed into the glorious image of God, we shall love them all the more because they are God-like. In heaven we do not lose our identity or our personality. No. Moses and Elijah are Moses and Elijah still. Abraham and Lazarus are Abraham and Lazarus still. In heaven we do not lose our memories or our intellects. No. We shall need these in order that we may recognize God and recall the blessings of redemption. If we have these, we can recognize our friends who on earth shared with us the blessings of redemption. In heaven human communion is not lost nor destroyed. No. Lazarus in Abraham's bosom shows beyond peradventure that there are human loves there. "They shall come from the east and from the west, and from the north and from the south, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and

Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." We are truly related only when we can say to one another, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

A CAUTION AND AN EXHORTATION.

I have been speaking of the value of religious friendships, and of the way in which God blesses men through their godly friends. Let me, in closing, utter a simple caution and a simple exhortation.

I. A caution: Do not rest under the delusion that God in some way will have mercy upon you in the last day, despite your earthly life, because of the interest which He has in your friends. This book gives no hint that there was hope for Orpah, who went back to her heathen life. God is merciful, yes; but God is just also, and He cannot override His justice. His justice requires Him to deal with every man personally. I think I hear the human heart say, "God, who honors human relationships and loves by using them as figures of the relationships between Him and His people, cannot in the day of judgment break up the families of His own making. A separation would wrench the heart of the saved as well as the heart of the lost." That thought does not trouble me. I believe, with the author of "Gates Ajar," that if the Savior, who has done so much for man, who has loved him with an infinite love, can say, "De-

part!" His people, whose love is only finite at its best, can acquiesce in the sentence of Him who loves infinitely.

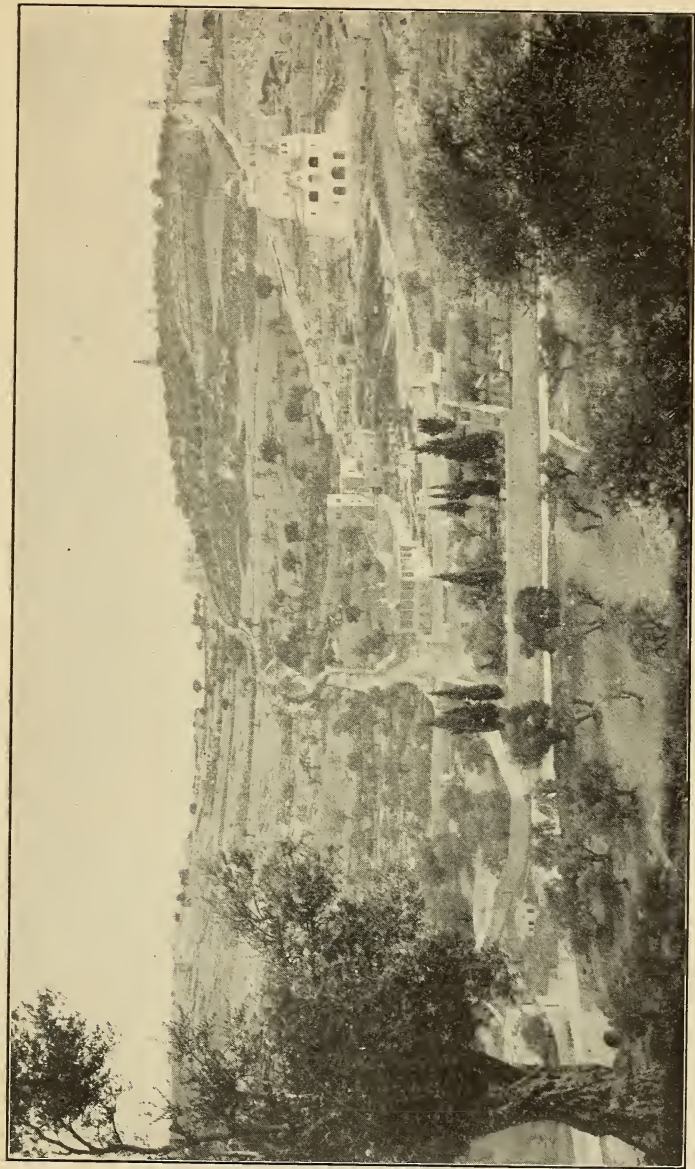
2. An exhortation: Yield to the persuasion of your godly friends. God is seeking to win you to Himself through them. God sent Naomi all the way to Moab to win Ruth. I want to enforce this practical exhortation by an illustration. My illustration is drawn from the story upon which Thomas Moore, the Irish poet, has founded his *Lalla Rookh*. A prince was betrothed, according to the customs of his times, to a princess of a distant kingdom whom he had never seen. As the marriage day drew near, he sent an escort to bring his bride. Among the escort sent to while away the tedium of the journey, there was one noted above all the rest. He was gifted in all things, and proved a delightful charmer. The princess felt his power, and was drawn to him. Ere she was aware of it, she awoke to the fact that he had won her heart. Heroically she fought her affections, and sought to chain them and keep them true to the prince whom she was soon to meet as her husband. Her pledge had been given him, and her honor for truth was on trial. It was a fearful inner conflict through which she passed; but she proved true. When the journey was over, and when the marriage day had fully come, she went to the altar feeling that she was sacrificing her very life to her promise. But what a glad sur-

prise it was, and how her heart bounded with joy, when, on being introduced to the prince, she discovered that it was he who had towered in the escort, and in disguise had won her heart. O ye friends living in another land from the God-land, God desires you for Himself. He has sent you this word: "I have betrothed you to Myself." In the person of your godly friends and acquaintances, He has sent you an escort to lead you to His palace. Trust them, yield yourselves to them, give them the best love of your heart. Do not be afraid of robbing Christ by loving them and yielding to them. Let your desires go out to them, and let your admiration delight itself in their habits and in their characters. When the marriage day comes, on which you shall be inducted into the mansions as the bride of Christ, you will find that the principles and dispositions and habits and ways which they embodied, and which won your heart, were all from God. You will find that Christ Himself was in them, acting in them, and looking out at you through them. You will find that it was the Christ in them whom you loved. He it was who wooed you and won you, though you recognized Him not.

Ye who are the subjects of friendly persuasion and solicitude by the Naomis of God, act the part of the beautiful and immortal Ruth. Covenant with God's people. Cast in your lot with theirs. Start with them for Canaan, the land of promise.

Say to them, "Thy people shall be my people." When you have done this, by and by you will take the final step, which carries heaven and eternal life in it, and will say, "Thy God shall be my God." All who humbly begin with the people of God end with God and Christ; for every holy consistent life, lived by the multitudes of God's Naomis, is a spiritual bridge over which immortal souls pass to Christ.

THE HOSANNA-DAY IN THE LIFE OF
JESUS CHRIST.



MOUNT OF OLIVES AND THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE.

VIII.

THE HOSANNA-DAY IN THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST.

“And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying: ‘Hosanna to the son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!’”—
MATT. xxi. 9.

THE week upon which we enter to-day is known in the calendar of Christendom as Passion Week. Passion Week is that week in the biography of Jesus which ends with the cross and the silent tomb. It is the fullest week of all time. It is crowded to overflowing. Upon the part of Jesus it is crowded with golden utterances and magnificent deeds and infinite sacrifices. Upon the part of man it is crowded with wicked plottings, and denials, and betrayals, and treasons, and false oaths, and diabolical deeds. It shows divinity at its best; and it shows humanity at its worst.

But it is not with the full week that we wish to deal this morning. We wish to deal only with the first day of Passion Week. The first day of Passion Week is called Palm Sunday. This is the day which the Church is observing, and we wish to join the Church in its observance.

To celebrate any day that is worthy of a celebration is a grand and an ennobling and a profitable thing. It is humanity bowing before some thrilling thought, some inspiring fact, some glorious doctrine, which has found visibility in life, a place in history, or which has ensphered itself in some beneficent institution. Now, no soul can do homage to a grand thought, or fact, or doctrine, or institution without being inspired and elevated and made grand itself. Association with the grand always means assimilation to the grand. Especially is this so when the soul deals with Christ. No man can honor Christ or celebrate any great fact in His life without receiving from Christ an impulse that will make him Christ-like. There were great events in His life which made the days upon which they occurred memorable, and every one of these days may be kept with soul profit. There was the day of His birth, with its singing angels, and shekinah light, and new star; there was the day of His crucifixion, with its darkened heavens and quaking earth and rent veil; there was the day of His resurrection, with its empty tomb, and its thrilling rumors, and its meeting with the living Christ Himself. And here in this Scripture is the great hosanna-day, with its multitudes all on fire with enthusiasm, and its typical events which are pictures of great things to come. No one can enter into the spirit of these days without being blest. Although Pas-

sion Week closes with a black cloud, it opens with a sunburst. It is with the sunburst that we have to deal at present. It began with a coronation of the Christ; a coronation which was a foregleam of a better and a grander coronation slumbering in the future.

Let us tell to our souls the story of that day, and then draw from the story its hosanna lessons.

The entrance of Jesus into the holy city amid the shouts of multitudes and the waving of palm branches and the songs of the children and the hosannas of the multitudes was not an unexpected thing. It was not a sudden occurrence. It was a result. Events had been working toward this day for months. Prophecy foretold it. Christ fore-knew it. The people were getting ready for it. They were growing in their feelings toward it. Behold how the people approach it in feeling! They talk to one another about the young man of Nazareth. They canvass His wonderful discourses. They examine His miracles. They search His holy life. The result is, they say to one another, "The young man is a prophet." And their hearts thrill with the thought that the long maintained silence which God has kept has been broken once more, and there is some one at last to speak for God as Samuel spake, and as Elijah spake, and as Isaiah spake, and as Jeremiah spake, and as Malachi spake. As they see more of Jesus, and hear more from Him, their estimate

of Him advances. Looking one another straight in the eyes, they put to one another this bold question: "When the Messiah comes will he or can he do greater works than these which we see the young prophet do?" They had seen Jesus heal the sick, cleanse the leper, give sight to the blind, and power to walk to the lame, and do other such wonderful things. At last Jesus raised the very dead, and then at once the question about His Messiahship changes into a direct assertion. Instead of asking, "Is not this the Messiah?" they assert "This is the Messiah." Now, it is only a single step from this assertion "Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah" to the shout "Hosanna to the Son of David." The people were ready for this hosanna-day, and that is the reason this hosanna-day came.

Not only were the people ready, Jesus Himself was ready for it. This was a great step. Hitherto He discountenanced everything that looked like a hosanna-scene, and the reason was "the time had not yet come." The prior things in God's programme had to be done; the disciples had to be instructed, the people had to be got ready. Now he inaugurates the day Himself. He sends the two disciples for the colt, and when it is brought, He mounts it of His own free will. When the multitudes proclaim Him the Messiah, He publicly accepts the proclamation. Jesus meant now to make a public offer of Himself to

Jerusalem as king and Messiah, and He did. This was Jerusalem's great day. This was Jerusalem's great offer. Had it accepted the offer, it might have continued unto this day the glory city of the world. This was the day to which Haggai pointed when he spoke of the "greater glory which would come to the temple." This was the red-lettered day spoken of by Zechariah five hundred years before. It is not necessary to detail the events of the day. They are all before us on the historic page—the procuring of the colt, the carpeting of the highway with the garments of the people, the waving of the palm branches, the singing of the doxology, the finale of the grand Hebrew Hallel, the meeting of the two companies, the one carrying Jesus to the city, the other coming out from the city to meet Jesus; the stir which the procession made in Jerusalem; the question which every one asked, "Who is this?" the scowl on the faces of the foes of the Master—these details are all here and require no reproduction. We need only point out this fact: All these things were in accordance with the mind of Christ, and received His approbation.

Did He not know what they would result in? He did. He saw Calvary in the scowl of these frowning rulers. Taking this step was Cæsar crossing the Rubicon. You know the story of the Rubicon. The Rubicon was a little rivulet which flowed between the boundary of Gaul and Italy.

Plutarch tells us that Julius Cæsar once led his army up to the margin of that rivulet, and paused there and debated, "Shall I cross it? I can cross it. To cross it is a very little act, but it is big with significance. To cross it is an act of hostility. It means a declaration of war. Shall I cross it?" He did cross it, and war came, quick and fierce. If Jesus Christ permit honor publicly to be given Him, and if He allow Himself publicly to be escorted as King into Jerusalem, then there is no help for coming events.

The inauguration of this "hosanna-day" is Cæsar crossing the Rubicon. Jesus knew that. It meant Calvary. Yes. But everything He did meant Calvary. To go to Calvary was what brought Him into the world. Jesus without Calvary would be Jesus stripped of all His power to save; it would be Jesus without a single "hosanna." He Himself inaugurated Palm Sunday, because Palm Sunday inaugurated that week of time which brought the cross. He was hastening on to the cross, for the cross was His goal. It was by the cross that He was to purchase redemption. He knew that the cross was due that very week.

Two things arrest our attention in the scenes of this day. The first is the willingness with which the disciples obeyed Christ, and the second is the fact that the children were among those who made the streets of Jerusalem and the walls of the temple ring with His praises.

It was lowly work which Jesus required these two disciples to do when He sent them to bring the colt. Leading an ass along the public highway! There are but very few in this community who would do that. But these two disciples did it, and they did it willingly. In doing that they helped to fulfil one of the prophecies which established the Messiahship of their Master. Had they refused to do that, they would have missed one of the grand opportunities of their life. Are you willing to humble yourself for Jesus Christ, and to do humble things in His service? If not, you are retarding the progress of His kingdom, and are beating back the hosannas which are rising to the lips of men. When men everywhere become willing to sacrifice their pride and to do the humble works which must be done in the cause of Christ, then will Christianity have a universal hosanna time.

One of the most interesting things in the scenes of Palm Sunday was the singing of the children. They took up the refrain. They helped to make the triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem a success. The Pharisees asked Jesus to silence them, but He refused. He said that their singing was the fulfilment of the prophecy. He said it was the perfection of praise. This was the highest encomium He ever passed upon any worship of earth. To Him the children's voices made the sweetest music He had heard since He left the

splendors of heaven and the songs of the cherubim and seraphim. Christ wants childhood. The children should ever be in the temple praising God. The praise of the great congregation is lacking if the voices of the children are not heard, and that is one of the lessons of this hosanna-day. The song of the Christian congregation should be like the ringing of an anthem into the air as anthems are rung out into air by the bells in the tower of the cathedral of Antwerp. In the shower of bell notes that fall from the vast spire of that cathedral are all kinds of notes. There are the deep great notes of the large bells which make the anthem roll through the atmosphere with the intonations of the thunder. But beside these great, sonorous notes there are the notes of the little bells pealing out the very same anthem on a higher key. There are notes which are fine and sweet; notes as small as a bird's warble. They fill the air with crisp tinklings, which, however, are as distinct as the louder notes of the great bells. All have their individuality, and all are needed to make perfect the anthem which enchains the listener. In the great Christian Church, Christ wants to hear the song of redemption sung by the mature and deep voices of the men and women; but He wants at the same time to hear the higher-keyed voices of the boys and girls. It takes all hearts and all voices to make the praise of the great congregation complete. Church of

God, learn to look upon the children as Jesus looked upon them. Take them in your arms as He took them in His arms. Recognize their place in praise as He recognized their place in praise. See in them the future as He saw in them the future. Stand forth as the defender of their rights as He stood forth the defender of their rights. Be to them ever a source of blessing, as He was to them ever a source of blessing.

But let me now speak of the day which we celebrate and from which we are seeking lessons in things that pertain to the kingdom of Jesus Christ. I wish this morning to have you look at this "hosanna-day" under three aspects, and to see three useful things in it.

In the first place this day is

1. A fulfilment of prophecy and thus a great evidential force in proving the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth.

When the story of this day is told by the sacred penman, these words are written, "All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets." To me there are no words in all Gospel history that are more significant than these. I am impressed by this fact also that they occur again and again on the Gospel page. They are the Gospel refrain.

My fellow-men, we must never lose sight of the value of this claim for Jesus Christ: He is the Messiah of prophecy. It is the foundation upon

which rests the superstructure of Christology. It held the largest place in the apostolic preaching. The apostles had the same text for almost every sermon, viz.: "Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah." Their sermons consisted in this, illustrating and proving the fact by comparing Christ's life with prophecy, and prophecy with Christ's life. They felt that when they had proved the identity of Jesus of Nazareth with the Messiah of prophecy, they had secured all the prophets, with all their prestige and power, for the defence of Christianity. They felt, too, that when they had proved this they had demonstrated that Jesus of Nazareth was the most wonderful personage of the world. And so they had.

If you would see what a personage the predicted Messiah was, look at the influence which He exerted in the Hebrew nation. The thought of His coming begat those pure and holy songs of the soul which the people delighted to sing—songs which elevated and transfigured the whole of life. His sublime character, which was painted in advance, and which glowed on the prophetic page, acted as an inspiration in the minds of the purest citizens, and was taken by them as a model. Thus the life of Jesus Christ before it was actually lived, was the greatest moulding power in the world of humanity. For example, Moses built his grand life up under the inspiration of the predicted Messiah. "He esteemed the reproach of Christ greater

riches than all the treasures of Egypt." Is Jesus of Nazareth this predicted personage? Then you can see how wonderful a personage Jesus of Nazareth is. Brethren, we do not magnify as we should the Messiah of prophecy; we do not ponder as we should the great things predicted of Him; hence for this reason, when we are told that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah of prophecy, the declaration does not thrill us as it is possible for it to do.

The predicted Messiah is a clean-cut personage. There is no uncertainty about Him nor about His life. His career is marked out in a detailed programme. Many of His utterances are anticipated and recorded. In prophecy His birthplace is named, His virgin mother described, His great deeds decreed, His treatment from men foretold, His enemies named, His death and burial narrated, His resurrection from the dead foretold, and the marvellous progress of His cause promised.

I tell you, that in the greatest work of all time, God protected Himself and His people from all imposture. He made it absolutely impossible to counterfeit the Messiah. Take one thing as an illustration; take the cross which God put into the Messianic life! The coming Messiah must be a suffering Messiah. God guarded the Messiahship against imposture by building an unscalable mountain of agony around it. Impostors are not fond of being mocked, of having their body cut with a scourge, of being nailed to a cross. The

true Christ must go through all this. He must utter the awful cry of abandonment. He must shriek, "I thirst." He must also, amid the agonies of crucifixion, die with these calm words upon His lips, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit." Could any impostor do all this? The question is idiotic. It is a blow that makes human reason stagger. No impostor could do all this if he would; no impostor would do all this if he could. The way prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth is perfectly marvellous.

Let me give you one case, a remarkable case, a case in which Jesus Himself was inactive, in which He was perfectly passive. I choose the incident in which the soldiers, who knew nothing about prophecy and cared less, figured. It was predicted of the Messiah, who should be offered as a sacrifice for sin, that "not a bone of His body should be broken." And yet it was predicted that He should die a violent death. At one time the prediction was in imminent danger. The Jews, anxious to have the bodies of the crucified Jesus and the thieves taken down from the cross before their Sabbath began, asked Pilate to see that these victims on the cross should be despatched at once. To satisfy them Pilate gave commandment according to their wish, and sent the soldiers to despatch them. The soldiers came first to the two thieves who were crucified with Jesus, and broke their legs to hasten their death. Then they came to Jesus

to do likewise to Him. To their amazement they found that He was dead already, so instead of breaking His legs, one of the soldiers ran his spear into His side. "Not a bone of His body was broken." His body ran an awful risk, but the risk was only intended to magnify the odd prediction and its odder fulfilment. In this fulfilment of prophecy Jesus was perfectly passive; it was fulfilled by the Romans, who had no interest in prophecy and besides no knowledge of prophecy, and by the Jews, who were the enemies of Jesus.

Right in this line the hosanna-day, with the triumphant entry into Jerusalem, comes in. His entrance into Jerusalem, as He now enters it, proves His deity and establishes the correspondence between him and the Messiah, who looks out of the page of prophecy. The true Messiah must enter Jerusalem as Jesus of Nazareth enters it on Palm Sunday. Thus it is written in the prophecy of Zechariah. Could a false Messiah fulfil this prediction? Evidently not. Too many human wills would have to be consulted and manipulated. Every soul that shouts "hosanna" would have to be handled and made a willing actor in a mere farce and in a gross deception. There was no way of securing this triumphal march other than the way in which it was secured. How was it secured? It was secured by the matchless character of Jesus Christ. It was secured by the exhibition of His divine power in raising Lazarus from the

dead. It was this miracle that led the people to crown Christ. Jesus must raise Lazarus from the dead, and this unprecedented act must electrify the crowd, before the crowd, moved by a common and an irresistible impulse, shall decree His public coronation. If Jesus of Nazareth had not been able to do the deeds of God, there never would have been the cry, "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; hosanna in the highest!"

I wish you, in the second place, to look upon this hosanna-day as

2. A type of the enthusiasm which should characterize the people of God in their service of Jesus Christ.

The one thing that reigned that day was enthusiasm. There was feeling, and thrill, and deep life, and outbursting emotion in the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and Jesus approved of it all. I argue for the equipment of enthusiasm in the service of Christ. I argue for emotion and plenty of emotion. I argue for fervency of spirit, the spirit burning, raised to the highest temperature of life and heat, and radiating both light and heat. The faculties should be on fire for Christ. I argue for good old-fashioned Methodism, which in olden times brought sinners to Christ by the hundreds. I argue for natures aroused, and religion at a white heat, and spiritual life full of efficacy and power, and goodness in which there is no languor, but in

which there is constant sparkle. There are higher moods and lower moods in the Christian life, just as there are higher moods and lower moods in the intellectual life. Every scholar knows that there are such things as inspirational moods, when all the faculties awaken and kindle and glow, when the heart burns within, when the mind is automatic and works without a spur, when the mental life is intense, when all things seem possible, when the very best in the man puts itself unbidden into the productions of his pen, when the judgment is quick and active, and the reason clear and farseeing, and the conscience keen and sensitive. These are the moods we glory in. These are the moods that give the world its long-lived mental masterpieces. These are the moods we want to dedicate to our religion. These are the moods which God demands. These are the moods which carry in them our strongest emotions. God demands our emotions. No one can take the book of Psalms and use it in the worship of God without seeing that God intends to call out emotion in His service. The book throbs with intense feeling. Strong hope, and burning love, and reverential fear, and bounding joy, and soaring aspiration, are all here.

The icicle saint would make a poor rendering of the One Hundred and Fiftieth Psalm. There are verses of psalms all through the psalter that are blazing fires. No heart can take them into

its hidden depths without breaking forth into loud hosannas.

I argue for man's best in the religious life. Man is at his best when he is enthusiastic in his Christianity. Enthusiasm is power, enthusiasm is progress. Enthusiasm is a synonym for effectiveness and courage and aggressiveness in the Lord's cause. What brought out the first open confession of Christ's deity before men? This confession: "Thou art the Christ the son of the Living God!" It was enthusiasm. What brought faith to this high degree of appropriation that it cried, "My Lord and my God?" It was enthusiasm. What gave to the Jerusalem sinners that first gospel sermon on Pentecost which converted three thousand souls? It was enthusiasm. What opened the gates of the Christian Church to the knocking Gentile world, and by one bold act struck down the prejudices of a thousand years? It was enthusiasm.

By enthusiasm, when it is of eminent degree, men propel themselves upon others in matters of taste, of affection, and of religion. Iron cannot be welded at a low temperature. It must be red-hot; when red-hot, then you can weld iron to iron. So you cannot weld natures to each other when they are at a low temperature. Mind cannot take hold of mind, nor faculty of faculty, when they are not in a glow. But when they are in a glow they can. When your mind is aroused with enthusi-

asm, it is then influential with my mind, and it is scarcely any more a matter of my will whether I shall follow or not. There is no other time when men have such power over their fellow-men as when they are in their higher moods. Love and faith at a white heat are irresistible. One reason why the apostles had such power wherever they went was that, having no fastidious taste or thought about anything, they had that telling, lunging power which men like and feel. They were red-hot all the time, hence everywhere men caught fire at their sacred touch.

We see this exemplified in society. Hundreds and hundreds of men, who are rich in learning, ponderous in mental equipment, ample in philosophical power, but who are low in degree of temperature, labor all their life and achieve but little. You see right by the side of these men, men who can bear no comparison with them in native power or in culture, but who have simplicity, straightforwardness, and, above all, intensity, who are eminent in accomplishing results.

They know in whom they believe and in what they believe, and with one or two simple truths, and with light and fire in the soul, they go forward and achieve ten times more than men who are better equipped.

There are people, I know, who have an antipathy to enthusiasm and emotion in religion. They object that we cannot rely upon enthusiasm. They

forget that if it spring from the grace of God it has an inexhaustible fountain. They back their assertion by an appeal to this Scripture page. They say: "Here you see the true working of enthusiasm. It is a bundle of shavings; there is a blaze for a moment, and then you have nothing but cold dead ashes. It is a mere flame, and then utter darkness. One hour, enthusiastic people cry 'Hosanna!' but the next hour they cry 'Crucify!'" The charge is a bold charge to bring against the grace of Christian enthusiasm, and the appeal to Scripture is a bold appeal; they are both mere assumptions and are utterly false. I deny that the hosanna people of Jerusalem ever cried "Crucify!" The charge that they did is without a single line of Scripture as a basis. Peter, and James, and John, and men of that class, did they cry "Crucify"? Yet the hosanna people were made up of such. In a city in which there were gathered from all parts of the nation not less than two millions, there were certainly enough people of diverse minds to create two parties diametrically opposed, without requiring us to slander the grace of enthusiasm and circulate false reports about the hosanna people. I stand by the hosanna people, and fearlessly assert that there is no proof against their integrity.

Enthusiasm! That is what the Church needs. It is only the enthusiast who succeeds. This is so in every sphere. Turn to the history of fine

arts, and there you see the statement verified. It is verified by the familiar story told of Correggio. The artist Correggio, when young, saw a painting of Raphael. Long and ardently did the youth gaze upon that picture. His soul drank in its beauty, as flowers drink moisture from the mist. As he looked upon it he awoke to a consciousness of his own artistic power. Burning with the enthusiasm of enkindled genius, the blood rushing to his brow, and the fire flashing from his eyes, he cried out, "And I also am a painter!" That conviction carried him through his initial studies. It blended his colors on his palette, and guided his pencil, and shone upon his canvas, until Titian on witnessing his productions exclaimed, "Were I not Titian, I would be Correggio!"

Turn to the history of the cause of Christ, and there also will you find the statement borne out. What was Paul, the chief of Christian workers, but an enthusiast? His letters are filled with transports of joy and thanksgiving. It was enthusiasm that carried him through the trials which he bore for the name of Christ. It was enthusiasm that planned and executed the herculean tasks which fill his biography. Rob Paul of his enthusiasm, and you blot out of existence the churches of Corinth, and Ephesus, and Galatia, and Thessolonica, and Troas. Rob him of his enthusiasm and you annihilate the epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, Ephesians, and the Pastoral epistles. Paul

was an enthusiast. His whole apostolic life was one unbroken "hosanna to the Son of David."

In the third place I would have you look upon this hosanna-day as

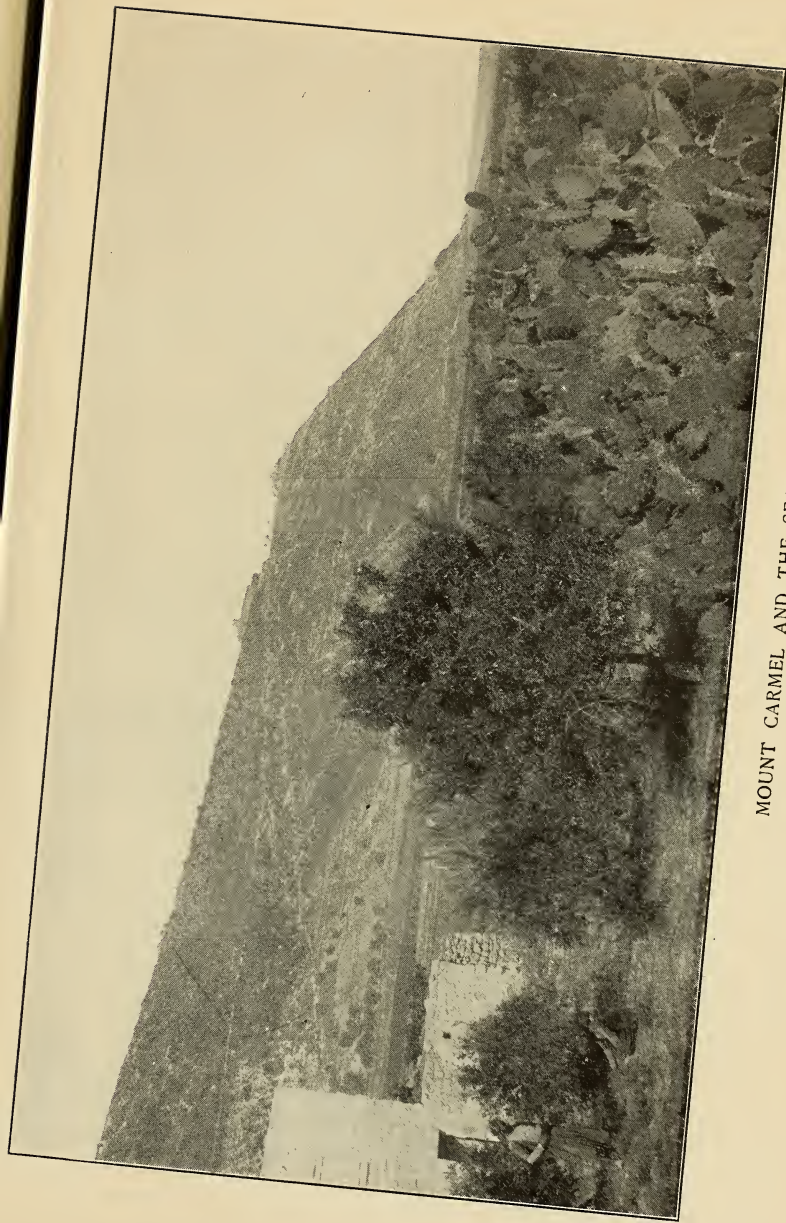
3. A picture of the great future coronal-day of Jesus Christ which is on the way.

I can only state this point, I cannot treat it in any detail. I can only say that this world is going to be some day a hosanna-world. All things are working for Christ, and the world is getting ready for His millennial reign. Some time there is going to be one long continuous day of palm branches. Palm Sunday has been duplicated and re-duplicated ever since the triumphal entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem; and this reduplication is going to continue until Jesus is ultimately and forever crowned on the grand day of final consummation. The world even now is full of "hosannas to the Son of David." The humble Christian school of the missionary in foreign lands is a hosanna sounding through the darkness of heathendom. The philanthropic institution that rises into sight all over Christendom is a "hosanna to the Son of David" echoing through civilization. The gorgeous cathedral standing like a mountain of beauty is a "hosanna to the Son of David" worked into stone and echoing itself in the realm of art. The holy life of every disciple on every continent of earth is a "hosanna to the Son of David" ringing throughout the world of humanity. These

hosannas are going to be kept up until the end comes, and then all the universe of God's redeemed is going to peal forth the grand Hallel in the hearing of eternity. This coming, climacteric scene is thus pictured by Bickersteth in his "Yesterday, To-day, and Forever :"

"The Eternal Father puts upon the head of the Eternal Son
A crown, which in itself is many crowns.
And then, from amidst the Throne a voice
Commanding Hallelujah. And forthwith
From cherubim and burning seraphim,
And from the hierarchal presbytery,
And from the Bride, low at the Bridegroom's feet,
And from the principalities and powers,
And hosts of angels ranked in endless files,
As sounds the roar of mighty multitudes,
Or rush of many waters in still night,
Or thunders echoing from hill to cloud,
Arise that pealing coronation hymn—
Crown him forever, crown him King of kings ;
Crown him forever, crown him Lord of lords ;
Crown him the glorious conqueror of hell ;
Crown him the everlasting Prince of Peace ;
Crown him Jehovah, Jesus Lamb of God,
Hallelujah ! Hallelujah ! Amen."

MOUNT CARMEL, OR THE RELIGION
OF GOD PUT TO THE TEST AND
FOUND TRUE.



MOUNT CARMEL AND THE SEA.

IX.

MOUNT CARMEL, OR THE RELIGION OF GOD PUT TO THE TEST AND FOUND TRUE.

“And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces, and they said : The Lord, he is the God ; the Lord, he is the God.”
—I. KINGS xviii. 39.

THE convocation of Carmel was one of the most memorable events in the national life of Israel. It was also a supreme moment in the experience of Elijah, God's one solitary open witness in Israel. The questions to be decided were :

“Which is the true religion?” “Who is the true God, Baal or Jehovah?”

You know the antecedent history. Ahab, the king of Israel, married a wicked woman named Jezebel. She was a Phœnician idolater, a worshipper of Baal. She was an ancient Lady Macbeth. She was Lucretia Borgia and Catherine de Medici in one. Through her slaughter of the prophets of God, the true religion was dethroned in Israel, and the corrupt, licentious religion of Baal was substituted in its place. It was not to be expected that the reigning God, Jehovah, who made Israel a nation, would submit to this. He had

better things for Israel, and by righteous judgments He determined to bring His chosen people into these better things. He sent a famine into the land which lasted three years and a half. During all that time the sun blazed in the heavens like a ball of fire. The atmosphere quivered like the air in a heated furnace. There was not a moist rock, nor a rill, nor a spring of water in all the land. As we strike the famine, dismay fills every heart and consternation sits on every face. The cattle are crying, the children are drooping, and men and women, burning with a red-hot fever, are fast becoming walking skeletons.

As we try to reach an adequate idea of the scene we recall Mendelssohn's oratorio, "Elijah." It opens with a wondrous passage, which tries to represent the despair of a whole nation perishing from thirst. After giving vent to the despair, first in sullen, restless murmurings, it pictures it as gathering at length a terrible cumulative strength which bursts forth in appalling cries of heart-rending importunate agony. Only the genius of a Mendelssohn, who had at his command the world of sound, dare try to picture a nation in the agonies of thirst.

When judgment had wrought its perfect work, and when the nation was ready to enter with downright earnestness into a search after a knowledge of the true God, Elijah, the prophet, pro-

posed a convocation, and designated Carmel as the meeting place.

Mount Carmel was the fittest stage for the proposed drama. It was the central mountain of Palestine. It gave the people a twofold view. "As they looked westward and northward," says Dr. Robinson, "they could see the Mediterranean dotted with the merchant ships of Tyre and Sidon—the great strongholds of Baal. As they looked eastward and southward they could see the mountains and villages of Israel, around which hung a thousand hallowed associations and memories of the marvellous power and loving kindness of Jehovah, the God of their fathers. Two maps unrolled at their feet: on the one side the map of the kingdom of Baal, and on the other side the map of the kingdom of Jehovah." This was the place of all places where the claims of these two gods should be decided.

When the day of meeting came, he bravely stepped upon the scene and opened his address with a searching question, which contained in it a charge of indecision and disloyalty, and a lack of common sense. Edmund Burke said he did not know how to draw up an indictment against a whole nation; but Elijah did. Here is his indictment: "How long halt ye between two opinions? If Baal be God, follow him; but if Jehovah be God, follow him. Ye cannot serve two masters; ye cannot be Baalites and Jehovahites."

Under the prophet's charge of indecision and disloyalty, the Israelites were dumb. They were speechless from conscience. They were silent from guilt. Thus it always is. Indecision and disloyalty in religion have no defence. God has constructed us with faculties which make decision a law of our very nature. On any important and essential thing indecision is unrest and torment to a thinking, reasoning, conscientious man. I am talking to your inner life.

But how shall Israel know who is the true God? That is the question, and Elijah suggests a method of arbitration for its answer. He suggests a test of works. The tree is known by its fruit; a man is known by his character; God is known by His works. God-like acts prove Deity. Elijah makes this proposition: "I stand alone as the prophet of Jehovah. Here are four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, a mighty prayer power—that is, if Baal be a prayer-hearing god. Let them slay and dress a victim and put it on an altar, and I will slay and dress a victim and put it on an altar. We shall not put any fire under the altar. They shall call upon Baal to send fire down from the sky to consume their sacrifice; and I shall call upon Jehovah to send fire down from the sky and consume my sacrifice. All this shall be done openly in your presence, and the god that answereth by fire, let him be god." This proposition seemed so fair that the people accepted of it at

once. They said, "It is well spoken." And it was well spoken. You would have accepted of this method of arbitration and so would I.

As we look at Elijah throwing down the gauntlet, we see in him a hero full of magnificent faith and boldness. But is he not too venturesome? Is he not guilty of presumption? Does he not take risks that are too awful? Is it not an unheard of thing for God to hurl fire from the skies? To a man of little faith it would seem as though Elijah were putting the credit of Jehovah's worship into fearful risk and imperilling everything; but to Elijah's strong faith nothing was imperilled except Baalism. The prophet of fire was not surprised to see fire leap from the sky. He would have been surprised if God had withheld fire. He was not treading an unknown way. He was not expecting God to do an unprecedented thing. God often had hurled fire from the skies. He rained a storm of fire upon the cities of the plains. He threw fire around the bush of the desert, and talked from out of it with Moses. By fire He answered the transgressions of Nadab and Abihu. By fire he burnt up the rebellious Korah and his company. By fire he answered Solomon at the dedication of the temple. Elijah knew all this. Jehovah had shown Himself to be the God who answers by fire, and Elijah had precedent upon which to base his strong faith and grand venture. Besides this, according to his own words, he was

acting in all these matters under the bidding of God. He who follows a commandment of God runs no risk. It is no risk for Gideon's three hundred to hurl themselves against the countless hosts of Midian. It is no risk for the Israelites to attack the massive walls of Jericho with rams' horns. It is no risk for the mother of Moses, in the exercise of her faith, to put her babe into the waters of the Nile. When the decrees of God stand between us and danger, we are as safe as God Himself is.

I am not going to tell the story of the failure of the prophets of Baal; I stop only to say that they failed, and failed ignobly. In the end every false thing fails. This is one of the axioms in the mathematics of history; this is one of the certainties of the universe. A false face, a false character, a false credit, a false religion, will always prove valueless in the day of testing and scrutiny. I shall not spend time on the worthless prophets; I am concerned altogether with Elijah and his religion.

We see Elijah now at his best. He rises to the occasion. He is conscious of his solitariness, but that does not intimidate him. He knows that he is alone, a single man against the political and religious power of the nation; but he acts heedless of the fact that the majority is against him. His motto is, "One man with God is a majority."

With every eye resting upon him, and looking

him through and through, he takes up the duty of the hour and plays his part like a man. Carefully and reverently he gathers together the fragments of the broken-down altar of Jehovah, and selecting twelve stones, he rebuilds the altar of God. As these actions were symbolical, he spake to the people through them. By the twelve stones, which represented the twelve tribes of Israel, he declared to the people that God's children should everywhere be one in their worship. By the altar itself, which was a parable in stone, he rebuked Israel for worshipping any God save Jehovah. By repairing the old altar, instead of building a new one, he declared to the people that he was the restorer of the law and of the true and ancient worship of the fathers. Having finished the altar, he dug a trench around it, then he slew a bullock and dressed it, and laid it on the altar. After this, to make the miracle of igniting the sacrifice all the greater, and to put faith to the greatest strain, he had strong men carry large water-jars, full of water, and pour the water on the altar and on the sacrifice. They poured jarful after jarful until the trench was overflowing, and until everything was saturated and dripping.

When this was done, Elijah quietly knelt by the unlit altar and made his appeal to Jehovah in prayer. He talked with God as a child would talk with its father. His prayer was earnest. The whole fire and fervor of his great soul was

in it; still, it was not frantic, like the prayer of one who fears that he may not be heard. It was instinct with the glory of God and the good of Israel. There was no wild gesture in it, no multiplied cries, no vain repetitions; it was full of faith and experience; it was brief and to the point. He asked God to manifest His existence, and to claim the homage that was His due; he asked God to certify him as His prophet, and in this way win back the hearts of the people. He did not ask that God would change the facts, but he did ask that God would make the facts apparent to the people. Clear and distinct his voice was heard, and this was the prayer that fell upon the ears of the attentive throng: "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their hearts back again."

As the prayer ascended, the fire fell. A bolt, charged with intense burning, flashed through the sky. Every eye saw it and every soul felt the darting brightness of its Shekinah-like blaze. A wave of heat followed it and swept over the multitudes, and sensibly struck every cheek. When the heavenly bolt smote the altar, there was a loud hiss as the fire and water met; then a swift cloud of vapor floated up and out into the air;

then a thick cloud of smoke, into which the victim had been transformed, rolled heavenward; and then the usual odor of burnt sacrifice filled the atmosphere. All this transpired in less time than it takes to put the description of it into words. When smoke and vapor passed away, nothing was seen but the kneeling prophet of God. There was neither sacrifice nor altar visible. Everything had been consumed by the piercing, intense heat of the divine fire, which fell red-hot from the cloudless sky. The very altar had been pulverized; the very stones had volatilized and had disappeared. God's work was a complete work, and the vindication of Elijah's religion was a complete vindication. Grandly was Elijah's faith crowned, and that in the presence of the people and to their complete satisfaction.

It is easy to forecast the effect of this wondrous miracle. The court and the priesthood trembled; conflicting emotions shot and reshot through the souls of the countless spectators; the vast crowds were overawed; instantaneous conviction took hold of the great majority. The people were deeply impressed, and a revulsion of feeling swept over them and through them. They felt that the grand old days of the fathers had come back to their nation. For a moment the silence of the grave hung over Carmel; it was a portentous silence. It was a silence like the silence before the storm-burst. It seemed a long, long silence, for

there was terror in it. But it was not long. It was soon broken, broken instantaneously. For the convicted and converted people, swayed by emotions which were bound to express themselves, as one man lifted up their voices and cried "*Jehovah, He is God!*" "*Jehovah, He is God!*" That glad cry of faith rent the air and echoed from summit to summit along the mountain range of Carmel, and peak after peak caught up the words and threw them back—"Jehovah, He is God!" "*Jehovah, He is God!*"

Such is the history. Now what are the eternal facts embodied in this history. The eternal facts embodied in it are three in number.

I. GOD'S RELIGION WILL BEAR TESTING.

Elijah tested it when he put Jehovah and Baal side by side. Comparative theology is testing it to-day. As the followers of Jesus Christ we can put Christianity by the side of any of the ethnic religions without fear.

Our religion appeals to man as a rational being. It invites testing and scrutiny. But in testing and scrutinizing it, it is only fair and reasonable that we should be honest and should have high aims. We must be earnest seekers of the truth. God gives no promise to triflers; and why should He? Men do not declare and defend their grandest purposes and principles before triflers. Nobody in

heaven or on earth has any respect for a trifier. If an architect were building a house on one of our streets, he would not open his plans and specifications to a curious loungee who happened to have time upon his hands to while away. Why should he? But let a student of architecture, a young man with a worthy object before him; or let a man who is in search of some one who may build him just such a house, come to him, asking a true insight into the plans and specifications, and the architect gives his whole mind and energy to the task of opening up everything. He is not dealing with a trifier. He is dealing with a man who is in earnest, and who is swayed by a worthy object. Christ deals with inquirers in a manner similar to this. The Pharisees, heaping contempt upon what He has said and done, come to Him and ask for a sign from heaven. They are triflers. They do not come to Him in the right spirit. They ignore the many and convincing signs which are all around them, and because of this, Jesus says to them, "There shall no sign be given you. Your spirit is wrong, your intention is wrong, you are trifling with me." While He denies them, see how He treats humble followers and earnest seekers after the truth! Contrast His treatment of the embassy which comes from John the Baptist with His treatment of the proud and haughty Pharisees. He gives this embassy sign after sign. He multiplies miracles before their eyes. He

heals the sick, He gives sight to the blind, He cleanses the leper, He even raises the dead; and thus overpowers them with proofs of His deity and of His identity with the promised Messiah. Man, in testing God and His religion, must be honest if his testing is to prove effective and profitable.

II. IT IS EVERY MAN'S DUTY TO TEST GOD'S RELIGION.

Religion will bear the test; that is one point. It is every man's duty to test religion honestly; that is another point. Have we all tested it? Have we dealt fairly and candidly and honestly with Christianity? Has the Christian religion received the thought and study which are its due and which the interests of the immortal nature of man demand? If you are not an out-and-out Christian, so far as you are concerned, it has not. If you are not an active member of the Christian Church, so far as you are concerned, it has not. The great duty of your life is yet before you, and to that duty I call you, as Elijah called Israel. Test the religion of God.

That you may be helped in your duty, let me set your duty before you. Let me show you how you can and how you should test Christianity.

I. Test Christianity's Christ.

Christ is Christianity. He embodied His own

teachings and principles in His own life. He lived His religion. He was truth. He was light. He was love. He was honesty.

You have been dealing with His disciples; deal with Him. His disciples often misrepresent Him. By their imperfections, honest as their intentions may be, they obscure His glory and alter the tone of His religion. Even the very best of His disciples do so. A simple story from His biography will illustrate this. On one occasion mothers brought their children to have Him take them up in His arms and bless them. But His leading disciples stood between Christ and the mothers, saying, "Trouble him not; take the children away." What a misrepresentation of Christ's interest in children! Had that misrepresentation of Christ prevailed it would have changed the whole destiny of the Christian religion. But Christ did not let it prevail; He corrected it on the spot. He uttered these precious words which have broadened His kingdom and enthroned Him in the home: "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." If you want to know Christianity, deal with it first hand; deal with its Christ. He stands as the great power and defence of our religion. Infidelity may build fortresses against Christianity out of the inconsistencies of Christians; it may even spike the guns of apologists; but the holy and perfect character of Christ is a

bulwark against which it dashes itself in pieces every time it clashes with it. I have all confidence in Christ. There is not a man who will deal with Him honestly and thoroughly but will feel the thrill that is in his life, and will be humbled before the majesty and purity and love of His unspotted nature. If you are not an open Christ-man the reason is you do not know Christ; you have never put yourself under His transforming influence.

2. Test Christianity's works.

See what Christianity has done and is still doing in the world. Compare Christian lands with pagan lands. Ask yourself in which lands you would prefer to live, and which civilization of all civilizations you would choose. Facts are lamps by which we see Christ and His religion. You choose the products which Christ and His religion have given the world. Why not choose the cause of these? Can you give an intelligent reason why not? Standing in the nineteenth century we can confidently appeal to the products of the Gospel as a proof of the worth of the Gospel and as an establishment of its claims.

This is the way intelligent and fair-minded men judge it. Let me quote just two instances. I am glad of their testimony, for it is the testimony of candid students.

I quote from the words of Chauncey Depew, the lately elected Senator from the State of New York, who so nobly answered Julian Hawthorne at one

of the meetings of the Nineteenth Century Club. These are his words :

"I confess I do not understand these evangels of free thought, who claim to do so much for the wide world through their scientific and sociological associations. London has these associations, but the poor and needy and lost of London know nothing about them. But they do know something about the churches of Christ. These evangels of free thought use a language of strange terms and beautiful generalities which convey no meaning to me. They would tumble down my church and bury my Bible and destroy all the foundations of faith, but they would offer in return only words and terminologies as mixed as chaos and as vague as space. I understand my Bible. I understand Christian charity and Christian education. I understand the doctrine of fears and rewards, and how it arouses and keeps in exercise a healthy conscience. I know what Christianity has done and what it is doing. I know what the Christian religion has been to this nation, and what civilization it produces when it is allowed a sway. A better society never has been and never will exist than that in New England, for its first one hundred and fifty years, when the whole life was dominated by the family Bible."

Here is a candid man testing Christianity by its works; and his verdict is, "The Lord, He is God."

I quote next the words of our late minister to England, James Russell Lowell. Being called upon to make an after-dinner speech, it fell to his lot to follow one who had indulged in flings at Calvinism and the Bible. He was brave enough to utter these words:

“Whatever defects and imperfections may attach to a few points of the doctrinal system of Calvin, the bulk of which is simply what all Christians believe, it will be found that Calvinism, or any other ism that claims an open Bible and a crucified and risen Christ, is infinitely preferable to any form of polite and polished scepticism which gathers as its votaries the degenerate sons of heroic ancestors who, having been trained in a society and educated in schools the foundations of which were laid by men of faith and piety, now turn and knock down the ladder by which they have climbed up, and persuade men to live without God and leave them to die without hope. When the microscope of scepticism, having hunted the heavens and sounded the seas to disprove the existence of a Creator, shall have turned its attention to human society and found a place ten miles square where a decent man can live in decency, comfort, and security, supporting and educating his children unspoiled and unpolluted, a place where age is revered, infancy appreciated, manhood respected, womanhood honored, and human life held in due regard; when sceptics can find such a place ten

miles square on this globe where the Gospel of Christ has not gone and cleared the way, and laid the foundation and made decency and security possible, it will then be in order for the sceptical literati to move thither and there ventilate their views. But so long as these very men are dependent upon the religion which they discard for every privilege they enjoy, they may well hesitate a little before they seek to rob the Christian of his hopes, and humanity of its faith in that Saviour who alone has given to man the hope of life eternal, which makes this life tolerable and society possible, and robs death of its terrors, and the grave of its gloom."

Here is another leader of thought testing Christianity by its works, and his verdict is, "The Lord, He is God."

III. WHEN MEN, BY HONEST TESTING, FIND
THE RELIGION OF GOD TO BE TRUE, IT IS
THEIR DUTY OPENLY AND FEARLESSLY
TO CONFESS THIS TO THE WORLD.

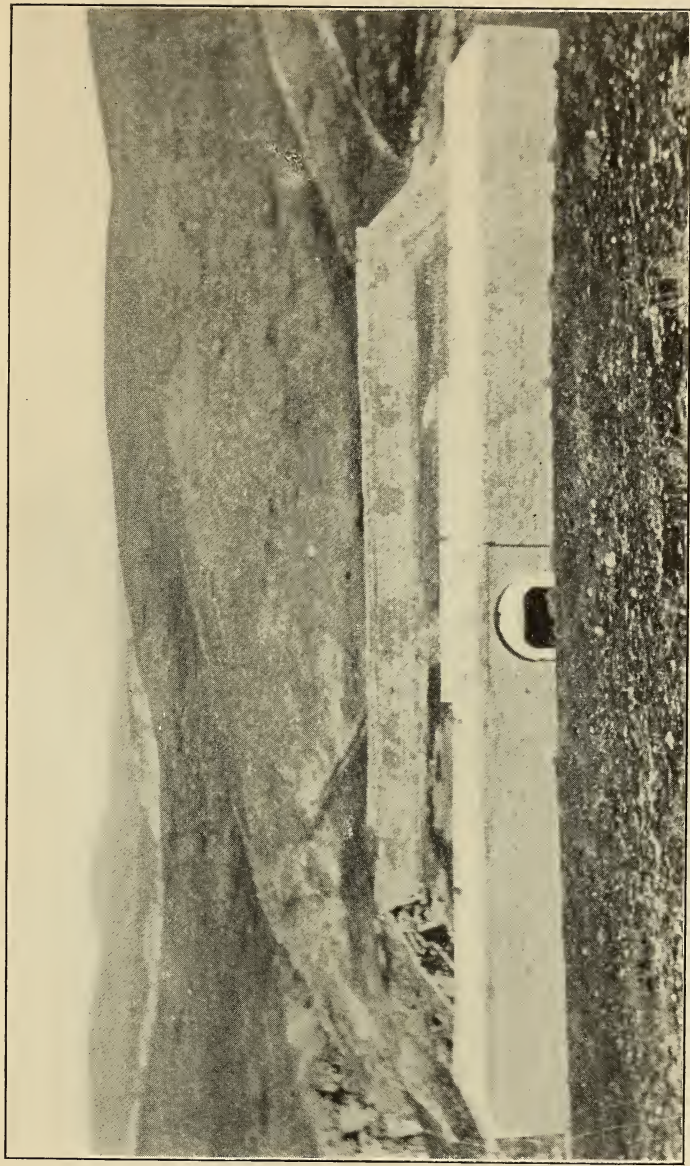
There should be no delay in this duty. It should be performed at once. Elijah worked for instantaneous conversion and instantaneous confession. This is apparently so, and yet what seems instantaneous here was not, after all, instantaneous. In reality, this conversion of Israel was the result of long years. The memories of the past were in it. Years of reasoning and of appeal were in it.

Men often say, during excitements of religious fervor, that actions committed in haste will be repented of at leisure; that it is not fair dealing with great multitudes to ply them with hymns and prayers and preaching, and compel them to determine before they leave the house that they will live a Christian life. They claim that it is precipitancy from which there will be a rebound. In the great majority of cases it is not precipitancy. It is simply bringing to a culmination the past religious training and thinking of the man's past life. It is simply leading the man to do what all along he has felt it to be his duty to do. In an instant the heart and conscience, and the whole moral sense of the people, went out to the prophet; but it would not have been so if Israel had not had its past history and training. Elijah did not precipitate things when he led the people into faith and into a public confession of their faith during a single religious service.

There are some here to-night to whom I would speak as Elijah spake to Israel. There are some here to-night whom I would urge to come out for Christ right now. There are some here to-night to whom I would cry, in the words of this Scripture, "Why halt ye?" "Why halt ye?" Do not say, "This is pushing things too rapidly. This would be a too hasty decision." Hasty decision! It is not possible for a single soul in this house to make a hasty decision. Some of you

have been revolving this decision for five years; some of you have been revolving it for ten years; some of you have been revolving it for fifteen, twenty, twenty-five years. If you should decide here and now this very moment, it would only be bringing the thought and purpose and conviction of a long past to a legitimate and a grand climax. A decision for God and Christ and the Church upon your part, here and now, a hasty decision! The thought is the suggestion of the arch enemy of souls. Such a decision upon your part, here and now, would be the most deliberate act of your life. O immortal soul, Christ has been waiting for you to own Him these many and long years. You have thought the matter over and over, and there is not one thing to be gained by thinking it over any longer. By the absolute surrender of yourself to Christ, join, this very hour, the multitude of His convinced ones, and with the sacramental hosts of God's elect send out your cry into the dome of humanity, "The Lord, He is the God!" "The Lord, He is the God!"

SOUL-SIGHT, OR A STORY OF
JERICHO.



THE SAMARITAN INN ON THE WAY TO JERICHO.

X.

SOUL-SIGHT, OR A STORY OF JERICHO.

“And Jesus asked him saying :

“What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?”

And he said :

‘Lord, that I may receive my sight.’”—LUKE xviii. 41

WHY do I choose this text, and from it evolve this subject? Let me answer. One morning while I was reading my daily lesson from the Book in my tower studio, I came across this story of Bartimæus. As I read it, I was suddenly startled by a cry which rang through the air. It was a cry with a quiver in it, and it sent a quiver through me. Was it a real cry, or was it only the creation of my brain? It was a cry which leaped out from one of the verses of the chapter I was reading. It was the cry of the blind man who eighteen hundred years ago begged on the highway near the city of Jericho. Twice it was uttered and twice I heard it: “Jesus thou Son of David have mercy on me!” “Jesus thou Son of David have mercy on me!” This cry which leaped from the printed page I read could not have been more moving in its effect upon me if it had been uttered by a living voice, and that voice the voice of

Bartimæus himself. It made me one with that crowd which surged along the highway. It made Jesus real to me, it made the blind beggar real to me, it made the miracle of healing real to me. I read the story through, and then I read it a second time and a third time. After the third reading the suggestion came to me: "Why not take a thought-trip to Palestine and visit Bartimæus, and get the story from his own lips?" The suggestion was so pleasing that I took the first thought-ship that came along, and in five ticks of the clock I was there. At the first tick of the clock I was at Liverpool, at the second I was at Alexandria, at the third I was at Joppa, at the fourth I was at Jerusalem, and at the fifth tick I was at Jericho. I had no trouble in finding the house of Bartimæus, for when on one of the streets of Jericho I asked "Where does Bartimæus live?" The fingers of no less than half a dozen bystanders pointed out his house, and no less than half a dozen voices said in unison, "Yonder is where he lives! His home is right across the street from the house of Zaccheus!"

My knock at the door was responded to by Bartimæus himself. I knew him at once. How? There was in his eyes, and in every feature of his face, the play of the holy light of Jesus Christ. Let Jesus Christ work in or on a man, and that man receives at once an unmistakable transfiguration.

I never had such a visit with any one as I had with that man. I never had any man shake hands with me as he shook hands with me. His greeting was cordiality itself, and the willing relation of his story was an enthusiasm. He lives to talk about Jesus Christ and to tell what He did for him.

I can give you only a fragment of his story. When he found out who I was, that I was a friend of the Master, he asked me what I wished especially to know. In reply I said to him: "Bartimæus, I wish you to tell of your blind experience, then how you learned of Jesus, then your experience in passing from darkness to light, then the scene which most impressed you when you received the power of vision; but especially do I wish to know from you if natural sight was the only sight that Jesus gave you?"

He began his story in low, sweet, musical tones. Christ had even wrought on his voice, and had enriched it with the tones of grace. He said: "You people of the nineteenth century have no idea what blindness meant when Jesus found me blind near the gates of our city. Your age is the golden age for blind men. Your inventions have broadened the universe for the sightless. They get light now through their finger tips. Books with raised letters have opened new worlds to them. Industries within their reach have brought into their lives the blessedness of work. By means of

the ability of doing something useful, the blind are made conscious of their manhood and are ennobled. In the days of my blindness, it was all different from this, for Christ had not come. He had not as yet started the influences which produced this golden age for the blind. With me everything was pitch-dark and unattractive. Then blindness meant idleness, worthlessness, degradation, dull and wearing monotony. All I could do was to beg.

"I was very fond of talking; that was my only source of information. I asked my neighbors what light was, and what sight was. I learned the names of the beauties of light: the sun, the moon, the stars. They told me of the rainbow with its different tints, and of the sparkling waterfall, and of the phosphorescent light of the ocean. They told me of the human face, and of the love-light in the eyes of friends, and I thought I understood these things; but now I find that all of my conceptions were radically wrong. A man must see in order to know.

"You have asked me how I learned of Jesus? I am coming to that. It was when I first heard of Jesus that I began to live. I never really lived before that day. A friend told me about Him. This friend was very kind to me, and visited me every day, but for a whole week he utterly neglected me. I was puzzled beyond measure at his absence. How had I offended him? But he came

back to me. When I took him by the hand, I knew that he was full of good news, and that he had some glad thing to tell me. He explained his absence. He had been away following Jesus, the new wonderful man of Galilee. He told me how the crowds pressed around the Master, how He looked, His age, His height, His complexion, the estimation in which He was held by the people, what the scribes and rulers thought of Him, the theories which were in the air about Him—He was a prophet, He was Elijah come back to the world, He was the promised Messiah. He gave me reports of His discourses, and repeated word for word His beautiful parables, and the beatitudes, and the prayer which He taught His disciples. When he related to me the parable of the prodigal son, I found myself weeping like a child. It completely melted me. I had never heard of such love. It set me saying to myself, ‘The Master must have a great heart.’ From that instant there was a longing in my soul to hear Him talk. My heart was completely won. If I only could follow Him! Such a man in my life would make me happy in spite of my blindness. My friend, you see, told me nothing about the great miracles which Jesus was working among the people. He kept that report until the last; but it was bound to come. He said to me, ‘Bartimæus, the best news has yet to be told. This marvellous man of Nazareth is a great miracle worker.’ Then he

related how Jesus had rebuked the fever and healed Peter's wife's mother. How He cured a man with the palsy, how He had given strength to a paralytic arm, how He had given a lame man the power to walk, how He had made deaf ears to hear. A thrill of hope began to course through me as I listened to these things. I said to myself, 'The story is creeping up toward my need. He has cured feet, and legs, and arms, and ears; He is getting pretty close to the eyes. I wonder if He can give sight to the blind?' I did not speak out my hope, but I thought it so loud that my friend seemed to hear my thoughts, for he immediately told me that Jesus had gone so far in His works of healing that He had given sight to one man who had been born blind. What my friend said after that I cannot tell you; I had ears for nothing else. One intense longing consumed me, one anxious cry kept repeating itself in my soul: 'Oh, that Jesus would pass this way.' I had an intuition which told me that He would some day come my way. I looked upon this intuition as a promise of God that He would send Him. Then I began to prepare myself to meet Him. Then I got ready my cry for mercy: 'Jesus thou Son of David have mercy upon me!' I shouted that cry through my soul a thousand times, and as I shouted it, I waited to hear the tramp of the multitudes, and I was not disappointed. When my ears actually heard the tramp of the crowd, instinctively,

and before I knew it, that cry of mine rent the air and reached the Master. There is one thing Jesus cannot do, and that is, resist the cry for mercy; so He commanded that I should be brought into His presence. When they led me to Him, He asked me, 'What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?' and I answered, 'Lord that I may receive my sight.' And He gave me the power of sight at once, there and then. There and then I saw His face, the first human face I ever saw. There and then I looked up into the blue dome for the first time. There and then, for the first time, I saw the wide plain and the towering mountain in the distance. There and then I learned what the green of the grass was, and what were the burning colors of the beautiful flowers. I was a new man, and the world was a new world. What did I do? All that I could do was to sing praise, and sing praise, and sing praise, and worship God, and worship God, and worship God.

"I must tell you of a strange experience which came to me, perhaps you forecast it. I mean my experience with reference to the coming of night, for all I have told you happened in the daytime. I had forgotten that there was such a thing as night; so the night fell upon me as a great grief. As the day faded away, I saw things dimly, and I thought I was losing my power of sight, and was going back to blindness again. The sensation gave me a heart-break, and terror struck through

my soul. There was no cause for a heart-break nor for terror; God had a new joy for me. He meant that I should see the glories of the night. And I did see them, and the sight was grand—a starry vault, out-flashing constellations, the great city of the skies with blazing worlds for its street-lamps, lighting up every highway and byway. Then I knew that I was living amid the splendors of God's overflowing love. Then I sang praise again, and worshipped God again.

"You have asked me, 'Did Jesus give you anything besides natural sight, did He give you another sight?' That He did. You may well ask me that question, because there is another sight, soul-sight; and as Jesus gave me both eye-sight and soul-sight, I can tell you that grand as eye-sight is, soul-sight is far grander. It gives a man a new world, the vast spiritual world, the world of thought, the world of morals, the heavenly world, the eternal world, the world in which God lives and moves and has His being.

"I had many plans for life when eye-sight came; plans which centered in self and in high physical enjoyment. I meant to enjoy travel with its grand mountain and ocean scenery, I meant to live on Carmel and Lebanon and Pisgah; I meant to visit Athens, with its sculpture and architecture; I meant to study the classics with their mythologies; these eyes were going to do up the world of beauty and form. I was going to revel in sunsets

and sunrises, in the play of storm and in the flash of the rainbow, in the spring freshness and the autumnal glories. I had marked out great work for these eyes of mine. Such were my plans, but I forgot them. I forgot to make my natural sight my all in all in living, because Jesus had given me soul-sight; Jesus made me see God's love, and when I saw that I determined to live for that. Jesus made me see my soul with its faculties and its needs and its future, and when I saw my soul I determined to live for that. Jesus made me see my fellow-men—all candidates for eternity, all having souls to be saved; and when I saw my fellow-men as He saw them, I determined to live for the salvation and the advancement of my fellow-men. Jesus made me see Himself, His nature, His mission, His cause in the world; and when I saw Him and His ambition and His glorious cause, I determined to give myself wholly to Him and to live wholly for Him. I followed Jesus to Calvary, and then to Olivet, and now that He has ascended to the Father, I am living here to bear testimony to Him as the Son of God and the Saviour of men. Thus I mean to live for Him until He comes to take me to that glorious world into which He has entered, and which to the eyes of my soul is as real as the world in which I now am. In parting with you, my brother, let me sum up the lesson of my experience in receiving sight from God. It is this: Soul-sight is everything. Seek it for your-

self and do you tell your people to seek it for themselves."

My fellow-men, here is where my subject comes in "soul-sight." For you and for me, who enjoy natural sight, here is where the prayer of the text comes in: "Lord, that I may receive my sight!" The text has a new meaning, a broader, grander meaning. Let us make the prayer of the text a prayer to God for soul-sight. The Master is here to-day, and His question is the old question: "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" As this man of Jericho tells us there is that which is called soul-sight, let us ask Him for that.

The miracles of Jesus Christ all have lessons in them. The miracle of the loaves and fishes means that Christ is the bread of life. The miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus means that Christ is the resurrection and the life. The miracle of giving sight to the blind means that Jesus Christ opens the eyes of the soul, and gives us soul-sight. No miracle of Jesus Christ is an end in itself; every miracle is a means to an end, every miracle is a door opening into a great spiritual reality. The door out of this miracle opens into the great fact that there is such a thing as soul-sight, and that we should seek and possess that. That is the paramount blessing of life. As the Lord asks us to-day, "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" let us reply, "Lord that I may receive my sight—my soul-sight." The soul is the organ of

reception; let us pray God for power to receive into the soul the things which belong to the soul. These physical eyes of ours are symbols. They are the symbols of those faculties of mind and heart and soul by which we recognize and penetrate and reach the core of things, and acutely perceive and apprehend verities, and grasp meanings, and discriminate and ascertain relations, and weigh and measure and judge and decide, and find out the real value and quality and essence of principles and purposes and propositions, and things moral and spiritual. Let us make the text a prayer for the opening and the strengthening of these faculties, and for power to make a right use of these faculties. Let us make it a prayer for the illuminated mind, and the enlightened conscience, and the sensitive heart, and the soul full of intuitions. Let us desire soul-sight and then pray for it.

I hear you say: "Desire soul-sight! Ah, that is what I should have, but I have it not. Tell me how to reach this desire for soul-sight, and how to reach an appreciation of soul-sight. You must have some appreciation of soul-sight, you must have some desire for soul-sight, else you would not choose to preach on this great subject; tell me how you reached these?"

I have not as much appreciation and desire in this direction as I wish I had; but I have more than I had formerly. I have reached the little

growth to which I have attained, just as Bartimæus reached his knowledge of natural sight, and his desire for natural sight. It was his talk with others that led him on. The possession by others created within him a desire for a like possession. Because they saw, he wished to see. I have been made to realize how little soul-sight I possess by dealing with others. The high attainments of others have made me cry out for like attainments. I have been talking with the men who walk the pages of the Bible, and they have stirred me up. They have made me feel my defects, they have made me see my possibilities, they have made me yearn to reach the things which they have reached; they have breathed into me a new ambition which has fruited in the prayer "Lord that I may receive my sight—my soul-sight."

Come with me and let us visit these men, and in this way learn what soul-sight is and what soul-sight does, and how attainable soul-sight is. The men of the Book are wonderful men, and they have been put into the Book to be our guides. What they have reached we can reach. Can the servant of Elisha reach the experience of Elisha? Yes. In the midst of the armed hosts of Syria, which hemmed in Elisha and his servant, Elisha was in the enjoyment of perfect peace. By his soul-sight he saw that God and the heavenly legions were his defence. He saw a circle outside and around the circle of Syrian soldiery; that cir-

cle was made up of the chariots of God, and these chariots were holding the whole Syrian army as captives. Elisha's servant had no soul-sight; he saw only with his natural eyes, and what his natural eyes saw was this: He and the prophet were Syrian prisoners. Can the servant be lifted into the experience of the prophet, and into this sense of security in God? Yes, by prayer. The prophet prayed that soul-sight might be given him: "Lord open the eyes of the young man that he may see;" and God opened his eyes, and he saw the mountain round about full of the chariots of God. God will give us soul-sight if we pray for it aright; and when soul-sight comes to us, we shall see the encircling providences of God about us and about the cause of God protecting His cause and His own with a sure protection. Let me tabulate for our instruction just what soul-sight did for these men of the Book!

In the first place—

1. It enabled them to see God and to live as in His sight.

God was the greatest reality in their lives. God walked with Adam in the cool of the day. God visited Abraham's tent, and partook of his hospitality, and told him future things. The secrets of the Lord were Abraham's. God appeared to Moses in the burning bush and in the quaking mountain, and talked with him face to face until the countenance of Moses shone with the very light

of God's countenance. God came to Elijah at the brook Cherith. It was God's ravens that fed him. It was the glory of God that Isaiah saw in the vision of the temple. God dwelt in the hearts of the prophets. God inspired the psalmists and tuned their harps. God fought in Joshua and in Gideon, and gave the Israelites their victories. These men of the Book never lost sight of God's will; they always knew it, and they always lived by it. These men never lost sight of God's providences; His providences were more real to them than the laws of nature. They saw God at the head of all life. They talked to God every day, and consulted Him in everything they did. A God-consciousness was the supreme thing in their lives, and it was the power that made them what they were. In measuring my life by their life, I feel the large absence of God from my life; yet I admire their life. It is a life I wish to duplicate. I do not see God as they saw Him; my consciousness of God is not as keen as theirs. God does not find in me the income and the outgo which He found in them. God is not my companion as He was theirs. Yet He should be. What is wrong? I have not their soul-sight.

Is there for us a way of seeing God as there was for them? There is a way. "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." The pure heart is man's God-seeing faculty. The pure heart is the lens that makes God discernible.

God is in everything pure; He is in every pure thought, in every pure plan, in every pure saying, in every pure deed. He is in these, and He manifests Himself through these, just as the sun is in and manifests itself in the sparkle of the diamond and in the beauty of the flower. The heart is the seat of human sympathies and of human affections. Now it is through holy sympathies and purified affections that we see God. It is through the heart that we see God, and not through the intellect.

Here is an astronomer; he has searched the skies over and over, and he says, "I do not see God; I have searched until my brain is tired." The man leaves off thinking and puts his charts and instruments away for the time and goes home. As he rests his brain by the fireside, he takes on his knee his sobbing child, who is breaking her heart over some broken toy. He tries to comfort her and make her happy—*i.e.*, he lets his heart work; he lets his affections and sympathies have a play. Do you know that while he is doing that he is in a fairer way to see God than he was when he was sweeping the fields of space with his mighty telescope? As he acts the part of a father, and gives the sympathies and affections of his heart a play, the Father in heaven, and the story of the Gospel which tells us of the divine Father's love begins to seem less unreal to him; nay, more, begins to seem real and true. He is bringing the right faculty to bear on God. Often a hard-

headed infidel, who has resisted skilful sermons, is brought to faith in God by the conduct or by the lisped saying of his little child, about whom his heart is exercised. The little child on his knee unlocks the door of his personality to God. We wonder at it, we marvel that this is his way to God; but we need not. It is all according to the truest philosophy. The explanation of it is this: The heart is the God-seeing faculty. In dealing tenderly with his helpless little one, the father's heart is active and alert and open, and God comes through his heart into his life. That is the natural way for God to come into any man's life. His loving and tender dealing with his child purifies his heart, and he sees God. Ah, my wicked, hard-heartedness is a shut door against God. I must with the psalmist prepare my heart to seek the Lord. There was one thing about these great men of the Book, who saw God and to whom God was everything, and that one thing was this: they were all pure-hearted men and men of right sympathies. In this I want to be like them, for I want to see God.

We are inquiring what soul-sight did for the men of the Book. Let me mention a second thing which it did:

2. It enabled them to behold and recognize Jesus Christ in His true character.

The men of the Book saw Christ in a way that enabled Him to make an impression upon them

far beyond the impression He makes upon me. I wish to see the Master as they saw Him, and to be assimilated to Him as they were assimilated to Him. Of course I am speaking of the disciples of Jesus. Not all the men who saw Him had soul-sight; not all the men who looked into His face and examined His life saw Him as He was. The Pharisees did not; Caiaphas did not; they had not soul-sight. The Pharisees saw in Him Beelzebub; Caiaphas saw in Him a traitor to His country. But the seeing of Peter, and Thomas, and John, and Stephen, and Paul was altogether different. They had soul-sight. Peter saw Him as the Son of God: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." John saw Him as the glory of the Father: "We beheld in him the glory of the Father full of grace and truth." Paul saw Him as the incarnation of the fulness of the Godhead: "He was the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person." "In Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Seeing Him thus, His disciples understood who He was and what His kingdom was, and they appreciated the honor of His service. Seeing Him thus was the secret of their whole-hearted consecration, and of their sacrifices, and of their labors. Seeing Him thus, Jesus became to them the way to God. Do you know how to get the best vision of God? You get it in Christ. He is the way up to Pisgah with its enrapturing visions.

Years ago a company of travellers out in the Rockies determined to climb a certain peak whose steep precipices told them that there was a grand view from its summit. The climb was a tremendous task. It was full of dangers. When they had climbed the steeps and reached the top, they were more dead than alive. The first thing they saw on the mountain-top was a fresh wagon-track, and the leavings of a picnic party, which had just left the grand sights to which they had come. On the other side of the mountain there was a fine road which afforded an easy ascent. They were ignorant of this way. Men are climbing the mountain to God by the toilsome way of nature and science and human speculation ignorant of Christ or else wilfully neglectful of Christ. Christ is the way up, and He is a safe way and a sure way. His own words are true: "I am the way, the truth, and the life." "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." In Him are the thoughts of God, and the love of God, and the saving purpose of God. When I stand by these disciples of the Book, and hear them talk of Christ, and preach His kingdom, and tell of His mission, and prove His deity, and go into raptures over His cross and the redemption which comes through His sacrificial death, I feel how limited Christ is to me, and how low are the views which I have of Him and His. I have yet to begin to comprehend Him as He is; I have yet to begin to take in the sweep of

His influence in this world of ours; I have yet to begin to imagine the riches of His glory. My cry to God to-day is for sight, soul-sight, to understand Jesus Christ.

We are inquiring what soul-sight did for the men of the Book. Let me mention a third thing which it did:

3. It gave them an insight into the fulness and meaning of the Holy Scriptures.

If you wish to get an idea of the fulness of the Scriptures, and of the depths of thought which are in them, watch the Master as He opens these; follow His eyes as they run through the holy pages. Where men see only the narration of simple incidents, He sees deep revelations of great spiritual facts. Take two illustrations. The first is very familiar, the second is not so familiar. The first is His interpretation of God's word to Moses at the burning bush: "I am the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob." In the heart of these words He sees the great doctrine of immortality. No man ever saw that doctrine there before, but it was always there. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob must be still living somewhere and now, because "God is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living." Yet God calls Himself their God: "I am the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob." The second illustration is the way Jesus refutes, by Scripture, the charge that God is a narrow God, a local God, the God of one nation

only, that He is simply the God of the Jews, with no sympathies for people outside of Judea. Jesus says, "That is not so," and He points to an overlooked scripture which proves what he says. He interprets the story of the cure of Naaman. "There were many lepers in Israel in the days of God's prophet, Elisha. If God were a God to the Jew, and to the Jew only, He would have cured the Jewish lepers, and only the Jewish lepers. But He cured not a single Jewish leper; He overleaped the bounds of Judea in His sympathy and cured a Syrian leper, proving that He was not tied to any one nation, but was the God of the whole world." That was a prelude for Christ's great words: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." I give these illustrations because from these two Scriptures Jesus brought forth truths which no one else ever brought forth; but they were there all the time. It took soul-sight to see them.

This soul-sight which Jesus had in such power He gave His disciples. "He opened their eyes so that they understood the Scriptures."

When the soul-sight came, Peter saw Christ's resurrection in the Sixteenth Psalm, and pointed this fact out in his sermon on the day of Pentecost; and Paul saw Christ's resurrection in the waving of "the first fruits" before the Lord, and

pointed this fact out in his epistle to the Corinthians.

It was such soul-sight in dealing with the scriptures that the Psalmist sought when he prayed to God centuries ago with the open Book of God in his hand: "Open thou mine eyes that I may behold the wonderful things contained in thy law." I thank God for this prayer; it fits my needs exactly, and I offer it here and now to God. I want to get more out of the Lord's Prayer, more out of the Ten Commandments, more out of the sermon on the mount, more out of the gospels, more out of the apocalypse. I want to get more out of all these, because there is more in them than I have yet reached. Standing before the open Book, I pray this day, "Lord illumine the Word to me. Show me the wealth of glory which lies beneath the old stories. Teach me the depth of experience which is hidden in the songs of Zion. Raise me to the height of aspiration compassed by the wings of the prophets. Lift me to the summit of faith trod by the feet of the apostles. The wonders are in thy law, but I cannot see them without soul-sight. Until I have soul-sight, they are like the well of water which Hagar did not behold; like the ram caught in the thicket which Abraham did not discern; like the cake prepared on the fire which Elijah did not recognize. Light up for me the old texts, irradiate for me the time-worn phrases, deepen for me the by-gone meaning, re-

wise for me the inadequate readings, unlock for me the hidden doors, make the Book a new book to me, the living voice of my God."

I am loath to drop this subject, but time is inexorable and its command is, "Get ready at once to bring your sermon to a close." I wanted to enumerate and to elaborate four other things, but I cannot; these things, viz.: Soul-sight gave the men of the Book a true view of duty, a large and restful understanding of the providences of God, a recognition and a knowledge of self, and a clear foresight into the future. The apocalypse of John is a grand illustration of this last point. The refrain of his writing is this: "I, John saw. I, John saw." One grand thing of the future rose before him after another grand thing of the future, until the future burst into this song of triumph: "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ, and he shall rule for ever and ever." To the man who has soul-sight the kingdom of Jesus Christ is eternal, and blessings of Jesus Christ are eternal.

I have spoken of soul-sight as it plays its part in the men of the Book; my sermon for the sake of balance needs my closing point, which is this:

Men out of the Book have had large soul-sight as well as the men in the Book, and this has made them grand in character and grand in life.

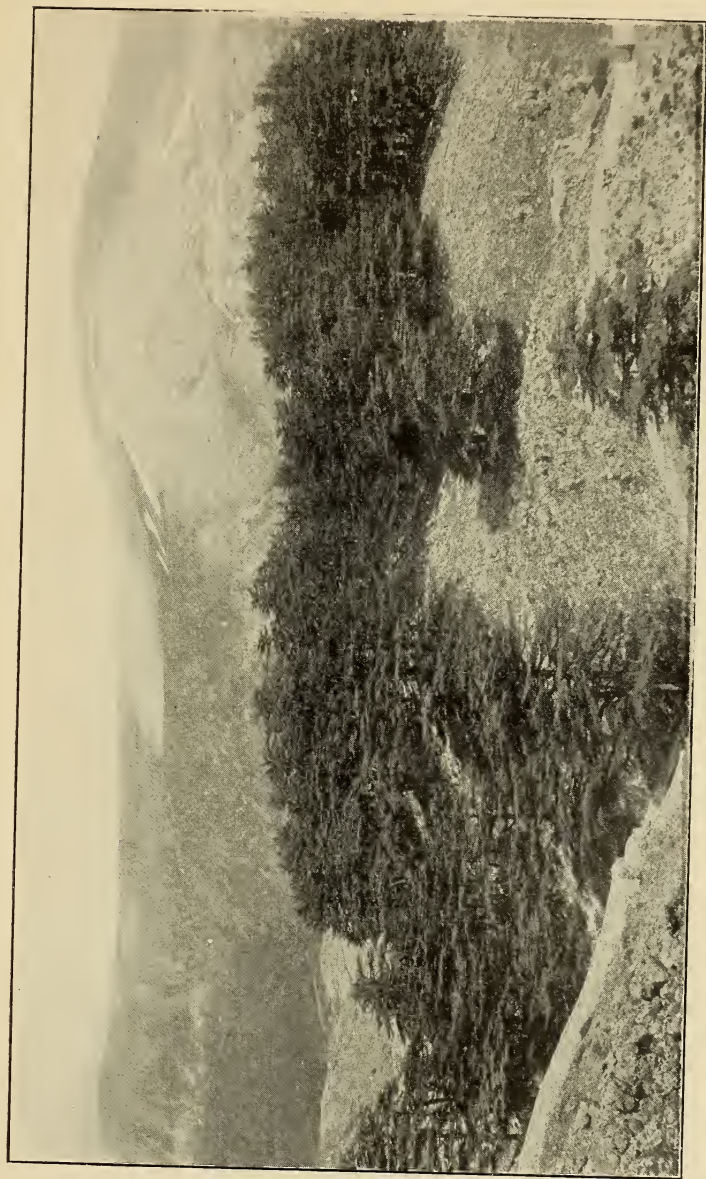
This point brings soul-sight nearer to us. It is telling Bartimæus that Jesus has actually given

sight to one born blind. There is Milton writing "Paradise Lost" and "Paradise Regained," the product of soul-sight. There is Bunyan writing "The Pilgrim's Progress," the product of soul-sight. All of our libraries are full of books treating of the great doctrines of God, and unfolding the great spiritualities, and each book is the product of soul-sight. There are our songs of praise full of visions seen by the eyes of the soul. There are the Paysons and the McCheynes of the pulpit seeing God for the people, and making the people see God for themselves. There are the martyrs going to the scaffold for Christ's sake and singing songs of triumph on the way. Such is their power of soul-sight that they take their songs out of the future. There are the missionaries of the cross, willingly accepting the sacrifices of a life in dark heathendom, because they see a kingdom of God in every saved soul. There are the Christian philanthropists of to-day who are giving of their substance to build and support Christian institutions, the sole mission of which is to keep alive the knowledge of God and set into prominence the great spiritual realities of life. These men are guided by soul-sight. Soul-sight is a possible thing. Do I want it? That is what I do want, for that will make God real to me, and Christ real to me, and the Bible real to me. When I once get God and Christ and the Word in me, then my life will begin to take on its glory; and

then I shall begin to be in the world a light for God, a true witness for Christ, a second Bible, a living epistle of truth. Then I shall begin to be my best self, and to reach out and up to the ideal which the heavenly Father has for me as a son of God. Then two worlds will be mine—earth, with its magnificent opportunities, and heaven, with its results and rewards.

Hast thou said unto me, O Christ: What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? This is my answer, "Lord that I may receive my sight—soul-sight."

THE SONGS OF THE PSALM-COUNTRY.



MOUNT LEBANON AND ITS SURVIVING CEDARS.

XI.

THE SONGS OF THE PSALM-COUNTRY.*

“The Book of Psalms.”—ACTS i. 20.

My text is almost two thousand years old, and the book to which it refers was at least half a thousand years old when my text was first written. This makes its sacred songs two thousand five hundred years of age. During this long, long period, its songs have been serving God, and elevating and blessing the souls of men.

To me there is much that is fascinating in the thought that the sacred songs of the ancient covenant people of God have done holy duty for long ages. To sing them is to link ourselves with a thousand generations of the grandest men and

* The most delightful experience which I had in travelling through Palestine was the singing of the old Psalms of David. I equipped myself for the journey by taking with me a copy of Rouse's metrical version. I had committed the larger part of this version to memory in boyhood, and then had sung this version and this version only in the service of praise. This version is full of the rough ruggedness of two and a half centuries ago, but it is one of the most literal translations of the Psalms extant. Besides, in my case, its associations were of the tenderest order; and this gave its rendering of the Psalms an additional meaning and power. When I reached the different sacred localities, I sung the Psalms which pertained to these. Some of the Psalms I

women that have ever lived. The prophets sung them, Christ sung them, the apostles sung them, the early Christian fathers sung them, the martyrs sung them, and when we sing them we link ourselves with the prophets, and with Christ, and with the early fathers, and with the sainted martyrs.

But the Hebrew Psalms have had a wider life even than this. They have had every manner of use, and that in every manner of life. With the music of psalms the shepherds on the slopes of Lebanon and the ploughmen on the plains of Bethlehem cheered their toil. A psalm supplied the daily grace with which the early Christians blessed their morning and evening meal. Martin Luther made the Reformation march to the Forty-sixth Psalm. Chrysostom in his exile, Wycliffe on his death-bed surrounded by enemies, Bunyan

sung over and over; almost all of them received at least one singing. It is about this famous old Hymn-Book, which gives us the songs of the soul, that I wish to speak in this discourse. I wish you to see its grand distinguishing characteristics; the height and the depth, the length and the breadth of its spiritual thought; the power it has been in the world; the characters it has built up; its glorious antiquity; and its present freshness and vitality. It is a book we should use, and use every day, that from it we may get spiritual strength, and that by it we may be taught how to praise the One Living and True God. The truth in these old songs is the old, tried truth of God, and is full of everlasting beauty and grandeur and versatility. It is truth which is as eternal in its energy as God Himself. It pours out from these Psalms just as the sunshine pours out of the old sun in the heaven, making new rainbows, putting fresh color into the cloud-land, and pencilling new tints on the new-bloomed flowers.

in Bedford jail, all stayed their hearts and renewed their courage by the use of the Psalms.

A verse of a psalm marks the lonely grave that lies nearest to the North Pole. The northernmost grave on the surface of the earth is at Cape Beechy, on the brow of a hill covered with snow. In it is buried a member of Captain Nares' English expedition for the exploration of the country about the North Pole. As the dying man looked out on the wide snow fields which stretched away toward the horizon, the purity about him became the emblem of the sinlessness for which his soul longed. A large stone covers the dead, and on a copper plate is engraved the verse which the dying explorer chose, and which meets the eye of the Arctic explorer to-day :

"Wash thou me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

A verse of a psalm is the motto of England's proudest university. The Huguenots at Dieppe marched to victory chanting the Sixty-eighth Psalm, and the same stately war-song sounded over the fields of Dunbar when Cromwell's Ironsides won the day. The modern German army, like the old army of the fathers, sung Luther's battle hymn, the Forty-sixth Psalm, as late as the war of 1870. You know how that war started and ended; it started with the cry raised by the proud French, "On to Berlin!" it ended with the counter-cry raised by the Germans, "On to Paris!" Well do

I remember how I felt the thrill of both cries and how I rejoiced when the men who sung the Forty-sixth Psalm made themselves the possessors of Paris. It was the fifth verse of the Thirty-first Psalm with which our Lord and Master committed His spirit into the hands of the Father, and with the same verse of the same Psalm Stephen, and Basil, and St. Barnard, and John Huss, and Columbus, and Luther, and Melancthon, and John Knox bade farewell to earth and welcomed heaven. Thus the Psalms come to us with a power and with a sweetness which have grown with the ages. The breath of the Eternal is in them. While this is true, there is in them also that which is highest and best in man. They carry in them the inspiration of tender and uplifting associations. When we sing them we are linked to a multitude which no man can number. There is no river of melody which has made glad so many generations in the city of God as this river of ancient Hebrew Psalmody.

My text takes us right into the heart of the Old Testament, and bids us love and admire and appreciate the Old Testament. It does this because the Book of Psalms, which it exalts before us with favor, is the very heart of the Old Testament. The Old Testament, in its completeness, has flowered into the Book of Psalms.

The Old Testament to-day seems to be having a checkered history. It is pre-eminently in dan-

ger of disparagement. It is made the target of sharp criticism. Lordly and self-satisfied critics are speaking hastily and erroneously about almost everything that pertains to it. While this is true on the one hand, on the other hand it is equally true that there never was an age when God gave so many remarkable confirmations of the truth and of the accuracy of the Old Testament. This is pre-eminently the age of exploration, and almost every month the pick and the spade are resurrecting new and startling witnesses which with one voice proclaim that the old Book is true. These witnesses are coming from their graves in Babylonia and Assyria and Egypt. Whole libraries, which we never knew had an existence, are being unearthed, and the books of these ancient libraries are telling the very same facts which this sacred Book tells.

The mission which God gave the Hebrews, the Old-Testament covenant people, was largely a religious mission. It was theirs to receive and develop the true religion for the whole world. It was theirs to prepare the world for and to produce the Christ, the Saviour of the world. And this they did. This is the reason they are in the Holy Book of God. If we are to understand the Christ, we must understand them and theirs. Especially must we understand their religion and their worship. We might as well expect to understand England and leave out the Established Church, or

understand Rome and leave out the Vatican as expect to understand the true religion and leave out the Hebrews and their altar, and their sacrifices, and their priests, and their prayers, and their sacred writings, and their songs of praise. Their songs of praise were the final and ultimate form of their religion. The fact is, there is nothing grand in thought, nothing deep in feeling, nothing splendid in action, that does not inevitably run into song for expression. Religion always flowers in the hymn-book. The hymn-book expresses a man's creed, and feelings, and hopes, and ambitions, and aims, and self. The hymn-book sets before the worshipper the goal of the soul. Its songs echo among the heights of our possibilities, and call us on and up. The great need of the Christian Church is a hymn-book that has in it the very latest revelations of God, and the very latest discovered truths, and the highest visions possible to the soul, and the third-heaven experiences of those who are living the God-life here on earth. Only such a hymn-book can elevate man and build him up in the true and grand and the beautiful. Such a hymn-book is the Book of Psalms.

In treating of the Book of Psalms I mean in a brief way to direct your thoughts to two of the leading characteristics of this sacred Book. In the first place

1. The Book of Psalms is an inspired book.

Old Testament and New Testament alike de-

clare that these holy songs came by the Spirit of God. Those who know the Book best assent to this teaching. With them the doctrine of inspiration is needed to account for the Book. The fact is, it is ignorance of the Bible that leads to the disparagement of the Bible. The men who loudly mock at the claims of the Word of God do not really know the Word of God. This was exhibited in London once in a club of infidels that met weekly for the express purpose of ridiculing the Bible. One night a member of the club, filled with a sense of humor and hungry for a practical joke, took to the meeting a copy of the Book of Ruth, which he begged the privilege of reading. He first represented that it was a story which had just been written. The members of the club listened with eager interest. The story held them breathless. It finished altogether too soon. Every one pronounced it sublime. They called it a miracle of beauty. They prophesied for its author an earthly immortality. You can imagine their chagrin when they were told by the practical joker of the club that it was but a part of the Bible, that one Book which they all hated and fought, and consigned to everlasting oblivion as a mass of rubbish. Every time it is ignorance that disparages the Bible and that denies its inspiration. Those who know the Book best can account for it only by the fact that it is from God, and that holy men of old wrote as they were carried along by the

Holy Ghost. Concerning the Book of Psalms John Bright says: "I am willing to stake on the single Book of Psalms the question whether there has been or has not been a revelation to man from God." Gladstone says: "To the work which the Psalms have accomplished, there is no parallel on earth." This is a fair method and an easy method which Gladstone sets before us, viz.: Judge the Book by what it has done, whether it be of God or not. Judge the tree by its fruit.

Suppose I brought you a book which I claimed had recently been discovered among the treasures of India, and which had been sent to me by the finder. "The book is certainly a marvel. It is an old book; its age is between two and three thousand years. It is a book of remarkable poems, written by different authors covering a period of no less than a thousand years. It is full of vivid pictures of olden times. In it the writers depict their own life and experience. The human nature in it is perfect. Hope and fear, and sorrow and joy, and defeat and victory are here in thrilling form. Great and purifying doctrines are in it. In it are perfect ideals of duty. God and man walk its pages at their very best. It is full of thoughts which inspire the purest and holiest life. In it are messages from God full of divinity and sublimity. In it are words which are balm to the bruised heart, and comfort and new life to the broken in spirit. Its sacred lyrics fill out the aspirations of

the loftiest and holiest minds with words as pure as their purest thought. Ever since the poems of the book were written, they have exerted the most wonderful power over the hearts of men. Great armies have stood bare-headed to sing them before great battles, and have knelt down to repeat them after great victories. They have actually revolutionized human lives and have made new and magnificent creatures out of both men and women. Suppose I could present you such a newly discovered book dug out of the antique vaults of India, and could say all this for the book; there is not a person here but would say, 'Above all books I desire to see that book, and to own it, and to get at the heart of it.' If I should ask you: 'Tell me what, in your estimation, is the one word that best expresses the quality which has made this book what it is to all these different men and times?' You would answer, 'That one word is inspiration.' If the poems be what you have described, and have done what you have said, they are inspired, and they are fountains of inspiration for the reason that they are inspired. If I should say: 'How can you be sure of this? We cannot tell certainly who wrote them, we cannot tell when they were collected; no man can put his finger upon the time or the place when the book was first said to be inspired:' your answer would be, 'All this matters nothing. We should love to know who their authors were if that were possible; but

the authors would gather lustre from the poems, and not the poems gather lustre from the authors. It is no matter when or where they were collected, the fact that they have been collected and that they stay collected is the most significant fact. If the most learned men of two thousand years ago had written in letters of gold that they were inspired, and if the tablets upon which they wrote were seen still among the treasures of the Vatican, that would be nothing in comparison with the seal of inspiration which they have in themselves in the uplifting and comforting work which they have wrought in untold millions of the human race.' "

My fellow-men, such a book is the Book of Psalms, and such a work it has wrought among men. Here it is in all its marvellousness, and the only way I can account for it is by the fact that it is a book inspired of God. It lifts men up to God because it came down from God.

In the second place

2. The Book of Psalms is a book that has grown out of human life.

I have spoken of the divinity of the book, I wish to speak now of the humanity of the book. The human in it, as well as the divine, is what touches, and moves, and sways, and captivates us. A New York minister says, speaking in this line: "We ought to be grateful that it did not fall down from heaven like the fabulous statue of Diana, nor

was whispered into any man's ear by a dove after the fashion in which Mohammed said he received the Koran; but God caused it to grow out of actual experience and human life." Each psalm had a close connection with the man who wrote it. God raised up full men, but men of like passions with ourselves, to give these songs of the soul and of life to mankind. For example, He raised up David to be a psalmist, as formerly He raised up Moses to be a lawgiver. To make David a psalmist He led him through the round of all human conditions that he might catch the spirit proper to every one and utter it according to truth. He found him objects for every affection, that the affection might not slumber and die. By every variety of function He cultivated his whole nature and filled his soul with wisdom and feeling. He took him to the camp and made him a conqueror, that he might be filled with nobleness of soul and ideas of glory. He placed him in a palace that he might be filled with ideas of majesty and sovereign might. He carried him to the wilderness and placed him in solitudes, that his soul might dwell alone in the sublime conceptions of God and His mighty works; and He kept him there for long years, with only a step between him and death, that he might be schooled to write the psalms of absolute dependence upon God and His providence. David's harp was full-stringed, and all the angels of joy and sorrow swept its chords as

they passed. The hearts of a hundred men strove and struggled together within the narrow continent of David's single heart.

But let me illustrate how the psalms in this sacred psalter grow out of life and experience. For example, some of the psalms grow out of the temple service. Watch one of these temple psalms grow.

The psalmist enters the temple just as the priest is about to offer an important sacrifice. The worshipper is leading to the altar the victim devoted to sacrifice. Noticing the beauty of the animal—for it is a perfect animal—he asks the priest, “O man of God, are all the animals offered in sacrifice as noble-looking as this animal?” The priest replies, “Undoubtedly yes; no animal that has a flaw or blemish in it, or on it, would be accepted. The animal must be absolutely perfect. It would be an insult to God to offer anything else. So particular is God that the animal shall be perfect that He commands me to search the animal through and through with the sacrificial knife. God demands that everything that has to do with worship shall be true to the core.” Attentively the holy psalmist listens to the conversation of the priest, and instantly the conversation is turned into a psalm to guide the thinking of all ages, and to inspire within all true worshippers a constant prayer for holiness. The psalm runs on this wise:

'Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts :
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Create in me a clean heart, O God :
And renew a right spirit within me.'

Noticing the Urim and Thummim on the breast-plate of the priest, the psalmist asks, "O man of God, is there any significance in these odd things which thou dost treat so reverently and with such care?" The priest replies, "Certainly. The Urim means 'light' and the Thummim means 'perfection,' and both together mean that God will guide His people in the way of light unto final perfection, if they will but put themselves under His guidance."

Attentively the psalmist listens, and instantly this conversation also is turned into a psalm which runs on this wise :

"Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.
Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel,
And afterward receive me to glory."

Standing before the high priest in his full pontifical robes, the psalmist notices that on the hem of his sacred robes there are little golden bells. He asks the holy man, "Why, O holy man, are these bells on thy sanctuary robes, and why do they give forth their pleasant music?" The high priest answers, "These bells are on my robes for the sake of the people. It is my duty as their representative to go into the holy place and appear for them before God, and offer incense upon

the altar of gold. The people remain without in silence, and bow their heads in worship. As I move about in the holy place performing my duty, the bells on my robes tinkle and send forth a sweet music. As long as they keep ringing, the people know that I am safe, and that God is accepting my service and intercession on their behalf. They are assured by the ringing bells that God is still their God and is pleased to dwell among them as their king, and is willing to bless them." On hearing this the psalmist accompanies the high priest to the door of the tabernacle and joins the throng of waiting worshippers without. The high priest goes within, and the psalmist worshipping without hears the continual ringing of the golden bells. His soul thrills with the thought that God is receiving and blessing Israel in and through the high priest, and he receives then and there a poetic inspiration, and out from his heart leaps a song of praise. It is the Eighty-ninth Psalm:

"Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound:
 They walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance.
 In thy name do they rejoice all the day :
 And in thy righteousness are they exalted.
 For thou art the glory of their strength :
 And in thy favor shall our horn be exalted.
 For our shield belongeth unto the Lord ;
 And our King is the Holy One of Israel."

For example, some of the psalms grow out of the majestic scenes which are witnessed in na-

ture. These set the human soul on fire, and out springs a psalm. Travellers tells us what a deep meaning these poems gather when you come to stand in the very scenes where they were written. The great multitudes, for instance, stand in the portico of the temple, and witness a thunder-storm come sweeping up from the Mediterranean. It strikes Lebanon, and the cedars bend and break in the tempest. It drives down the hill of Hermon, roars through the wilderness, and at last breaks over Jerusalem in great torrents of rain. Then the sun comes out again and all is still. But out of that thunder-storm there has come a psalm. The mantle of inspiration has fallen on a psalmist in the witnessing crowd, and the Twenty-ninth Psalm pours from his heart, not as men sing of the storm now, for to him God informs and fills the storm. The psalm runs on this wise :

“ The voice of the Lord is upon the waters :
The Lord of glory thundereth :
Even the Lord is upon many waters.
The voice of the Lord is powerful :
The voice of the Lord is full of majesty.
The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars ;
Yea, the Lord breaketh in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.
The voice of the Lord cleaveth the flames of fire.
The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness :
The Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.
The Lord will give strength to his people :
The Lord will bless his people with peace.”

The man quivers with a sense of the sublime, and he puts a quiver into his psalm.

On another occasion the psalmist stands one starry night under the open dome. He is face to face with immensity. His mind plunges out into infinite depths, and up into infinite heights. The universe is before him; the countless stars, unmeasured and immeasurable thoroughfares of glory, steeples of worlds, oceans of constellations, great burning orbs which could swallow up our sun without adding a perceptible beam to their splendor; great massive worlds which could swallow up our earth without adding a perceptible sprinkle of dust to their vast magnitude; great starry kingdoms whose tremendous orbit is an infinity, and whose revolution is an eternity. The psalmist is overawed by the scene, and he pours his feelings into a psalm.

“O Lord our Lord,
 How excellent is thy name in all the earth !
 Who hath set thy glory upon the heavens.
 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,
 The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained :
 Then say I : What is man, that thou art mindful of him ?
 And the son of man, that thou visitest him ?”

For example, psalms grow out of the religious experience of the writers. Here is one case. David is converted, but he reaches conversion through the bitter conviction of sin. It is a long while before he can throw himself upon the mercy of God and believe that there is pardon for him. He is too vile to be forgiven, he has gone too far

into sin. That is what he thinks, and the thought plunges him into a horrible darkness. But at last the light breaks, and he sees that where sin abounds grace doth much more abound. God takes away his sin and the result is, before he knows it, he is putting the story of his conversion into a psalm—the Fortieth Psalm. As the old Scotch version has it the psalm opens thus :

“ I waited for the Lord my God,
And patiently did bear :
At length to me He did incline,
My voice and cry to hear.

“ He took me from a fearful pit
And from the miry clay,
And on a rock He set my feet,
Establishing my way.

“ He put a new song in my mouth,
My God to magnify :
Many shall see it, and shall fear
And on the Lord rely.”

For example, psalms grow out of the daily avocations of the writers. This is an instance : David, the poet-shepherd, follows his flocks, guides them, defends them, seeks out new pastures for them, takes them through the grim passes where the wild beasts lurk—the valley of the shadow of death. He never for a moment fails in his care over them, and so at last, on some high day of his soul, an inspirational day, a day after he has had a hard time defending and caring for his charge,

the thought comes to him that he himself is a charge to God, just as his flocks are a charge to him. The result is, out of this tender thought of his dependence upon God springs a psalm, a psalm which lights up his shepherd-life with the beauty of a holy and an instructive analogy :

“ The Lord is my shepherd ; I shall not want.
 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures :
 He leadeth me beside the still waters.
 He restoreth my soul :
 He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
 I will fear no evil, for thou art with me :
 Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine
 enemies :
 Thou anointest my head with oil ; my cup runneth over.
 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my
 life :
 And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

This psalm is a word-painting taken from a life filled with an intense sense of the constant presence of God.

In the third place

3. The Book of Psalms is a sifted and full book. It is true that there are only one hundred and fifty psalms, but Athanasius tells us that the present selection of one hundred and fifty was made out of three thousand psalms, which at that time were sung on the hills and in the valleys of Judea. Two thousand eight hundred and fifty psalms re-

jected out of three thousand! Certainly the sifting was severe: and certainly in the one hundred and fifty we must have the very finest of the wheat. I suppose that is just about the proportion of the hymns written which are worth singing and worth preserving for our praise. One hundred and fifty out of three thousand! My point is this: These one hundred and fifty are very full. They have a fulness of variety. Let me give but a fraction of their variety. The Twenty-third Psalm is a solo. The Seventh Psalm is a prayer. The Forty-third Psalm is a soliloquy. The Twenty-second Psalm is "The Story of the Cross." The Twenty-fourth Psalm is an anthem. The One Hundred and First Psalm is a "Song of the Home." The One Hundred and Fourth Psalm is a tone-painting of nature as seen from the summit of some Rigi. The Seventy-eighth Psalm is a recital of national history. The One Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm is a sermon on God's Law. And the One Hundred and Fiftieth Psalm is a grand hallelujah chorus with a full orchestra.

But this enumeration of variety has to do only with the form in which we find the Hebrew psalms: what is more important is the fulness of the book in regard to thought and substance.

In the book substance surpasses form. Here we find pure doctrine and pure life. The ideal man is portrayed here, and in the midst of active life, as in the Fifteenth Psalm. You have here

also the great fact of immortality. You have it in such expressions as these :

“ God will redeem my soul from the grave :
For he shall receive me.”

“ As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness.
I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.”

“ Thou wilt show me the path of life :
In thy presence is fulness of joy :
At thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore.”

“ Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel,
And afterward receive me to glory.
Whom have I in the heaven but thee ?
And there is none upon the earth that I desire beside thee.
My flesh and my heart faileth :
But God is the strength of my heart,
And my portion forever.”

The book excels in its presentation of God, and His attributes, and His life. For pure praise it leads all hymnology. When hymn-writers want to put exalted praise into their hymns, they have to go to the Praise Psalms of the Hebrews and borrow from these. Reverence is of Hebrew birth. Not only is God here, but Christ is here. In the Fortieth Psalm we have His incarnation pictured. In the Twenty-second Psalm we have His crucifixion pictured. Listen :

“ They gave me gall for my meat :
And in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink :
The assembly of the wicked have enclosed me :
They pierced my hands and my feet.
They look and stare upon me.
They part my garments among them
And cast lots upon my vesture.”

If that be not the story of the cross, what is it? So fully is Christ in the Book of Psalms that it gives us the precise words which He uttered on the cross—His cry of soul-abandonment :

“ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? ”

And the precise words which He uttered with His dying breath :

“ Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit.”

To all this must be added the fact that the deep spiritual life of the worshipping soul of man finds a large and ever-recurring place in the Book of Psalms. Its psalms were the outgrowth of the religious experience of the Old-Testament worshippers. They voiced their inner life. Where can you find purer thought, or more majestic sentiment, or greater pathos of devotion, or deeper confession of sin, or more of the spirit of worship, or a greater joy over pardon, or a loftier adoration, or a clearer conception of God? Name a single holy principle that cannot be found in the Hebrew psalms, or an aspiration, or a doctrine, or a noble type of life, or a blessed experience of the immortal soul, or any subject whatever calling for praise. Find me if you can a man in this New-Testament dispensation who embodies or equals all that is grand and good in the old Hebrew psalter. There is no such person on this side of the Gates of Pearl. The Old Hebrew psalmists took their harps

and boldly soared to the very walls of the celestial city, and rivalled the songs of the choristers who strike their harps and sing under the holy and musical shadow of the Tree of Life.

My fellow-men, do I err in thus lauding the Book of Psalms? Mark what the book has done. It has given the world those heroes of faith mentioned in the Westminster Abbey of the Bible, the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews. The prophets were educated under it. It made Isaiah, and Daniel, and Samuel. More than this, it refreshed and satisfied the human nature of Jesus Christ. I tell you we people of the nineteenth century should have a profound respect for the hymn book which Jesus Christ used, and which satisfied and built up and made perfect His human nature.

In closing let me ask you, How many of the psalms in this wonderful book can you sing? How many of them can you make your own? The answer to this question will gauge your spiritual standing, and will tell just where you are in the religious life. Can you sing the Fortieth Psalm, the psalm which celebrates conversion? Can you sing the Thirty-second Psalm, which expresses the joy of the man who has been pardoned? Can you sing the One Hundred and Thirty-first Psalm, the psalm which celebrates the incarnation of the grace of humility? Can you sing the First Psalm, the psalm which describes a right life lived before God? Can you sing the Fifteenth Psalm, the

psalm which gives a vivid picture of the worshipper who is accepted by the Lord? Can you sing the Twenty-third Psalm, the psalm of calm assurance in God? Into how many of these holy and divine psalms can you pour your religious experience and find that mould and experience exactly correspond? Brethren, let us aim more at climbing to the grand soul heights in God's landscape of sacred and inspired psalmody. Let us prize more, and reverently use more this holy book of praise, which begins with a Benediction and ends with a Hallelujah.

THE PROPHETS OF THE HOLY LAND.



THE PROPHETS MICAH, HAGGAI, MALACHI AND ZECHARIAH. BY SARGENT.
From the Frieze, Boston Public Library.

XII.

THE PROPHETS OF THE HOLY LAND.

"Since the days that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day, I have even sent unto you all my prophets, daily rising up early, and sending them."—JER. vii. 25.

THE prophets are not honored and used as they should be. And yet they are the grandest men of inspiration; and yet the principles which they uttered are the everlasting principles which make for righteousness; and yet many of their predictions canopy the age in which we live, and are working themselves out into realities before our eyes; and yet the golden promises which they uttered in the name of God are the very things that make the future the golden age to Christian faith. What would the future be to the Church of God if the Seventy-second Psalm and the sixtieth chapter of Isaiah were never to be translated from the printed page into living facts?

The grandest period of the Church of Christ is as yet an unrealized thing, and this is what we men of America are taught by the old Hebrew prophets, who have painted the future of the Christian Church in their books of prediction. Each prophet stands forth in his individuality, and is

the centre of a wide and interesting historic circle. Shining singly, each one is a brilliant star; but grouped together they are what De Costa calls "a solar system of men of God." They were great men in the ages away back when contemporary nations produced men of immortal renown. For example, when Homer was putting the story of his nation into undying verse, and when Lycurgus was framing laws for Sparta, Jonah was preaching the mercy of God to the Gentiles and saving that great city Nineveh. He was making a history worthy to be written by the pen of God. While Romulus was building Rome, Isaiah and Micah and Nahum were building up the kingdom of Judah in righteousness, and thus giving it perpetuity. While Æschylus, the theologian of heathendom, was laying down the system of ethics for the Greeks, Haggai and Zechariah were breathing spiritual life into the Jews, and giving them the nerve power and the heart force to lift their temple from its ashes, and make it once more the pride of Jerusalem. While Socrates, the reformer of heathendom, was trying to purify his people, and while he was dying as a martyr for his faith, Malachi was putting the Jewish nation into the furnace that he might burn out of it all the dross and make it every whit pure gold. The Hebrew prophets were grand men, and that in the ages which produced grand men. They towered amid conspicuous contemporaries. They were all of

them magnificent personalities, from Samuel to Malachi—or, to sweep a broader field, from Enoch, the seventh from Adam to John the Baptist, to whom the great proud city of Jerusalem, rising *en masse*, went out into the wilderness.

In this study we wish to take only a general survey. We simply want to climb the Arch of Triumph and take a bird's-eye view of the Paris of prophecy. We want simply to go to the summit of Pisgah, and take an outward look over the shining land. The one question which is to act as our guide is

I. WHO WERE THE HEBREW PROPHETS?

1. *The Hebrew prophets were the mouthpieces of God.*

God selected them, and God commissioned them; and God put His messages into their hearts; and God impelled them to utter these messages. God made them predictors of the events of the hidden future, and also preachers of the present truth and inculcators of present duty. When they uttered predictions or issued commandments, this was the solemn formula with which they began: "Thus saith the Lord." They were the intimate friends of God, living near the gates of heaven and overhearing the counsels of Jehovah. This the people recognized, and hence they received them as the oracles of heaven and the mediums of divine communication. They were the

medium of communication between God and the Hebrews, just as the Bible is the medium of communication between God and us. They were among the people as moral dramatists, and as a public conscience, and as a walking law.

Because they were the representatives of God among the people, the sweep of their office was vast, and the works which they performed were many and various. The guardianship of God is universal, so their guardianship swept the whole nation. They were national watchmen. They watched the throne with its king and its surrounding princes. They watched the people in their public and private life. As the servant of God the prophet held himself ready to receive any commission from God, and to do any work assigned by God. In the name of the Lord he anointed kings, and in the name of the Lord he rejected and deposed them. In the name of the Lord he predicted famine and inaugurated revolutions and began reformations. In the name of the Lord he denounced a corrupt priesthood and waged an unrelenting war against it.

His office and its functions had to do with all the relations of life over which God has authority. Hence the old Hebrew prophet in his faithful performance of duty revealed the unchangeable will of God for man in all ages and in all spheres of life. Hence the Hebrew prophet will always be a living power in humanity.

2. *The Hebrew prophets were the children of the people.*

The prophethood was a democracy in a monarchy, and as such it asserted and guarded the rights of the people. This was the reason the people stood by the prophets and sustained their schools. Their schools were rooted in popular esteem. The people looked upon them as from among themselves, and as champions of the sovereignty of the people, as well as of the sovereignty of God. They were considered the people's defence against priestcraft, and kingcraft, and all wicked oppressors.

This was the true view. The prophets were of the people and for the people. They were like their God. God is the truest friend of the people. The popular and democratic and independent character of the prophets is seen in this. Although they wielded a great influence, yet they were not inducted into office by any ecclesiastical authority. There was no prophetic succession. They were not even continuous, but were occasional. They rose up here and there, by the impulse of their nature, when God filled their nature with His own Spirit. Only men of certain families could be priests, but persons of all the families of the nation could be prophets when divinely moved. That they might be of the people, and command the love and support of the people, God chose them from all tribes. So democratic was the prophet-

hood that in two instances eminent prophets were women; and one of them, Huldah, was of such reputation that to her, though Jeremiah was still alive and in full authority, King Josiah sent for advice in impending public danger. There is always a reason for the sway of power by a class, and one reason for the sway of prophetic power in Palestine was this: The prophets were men from the people, and the people recognized them as their kindred, and trusted them and loved them as such. God knew the power of a democratic class, and hence He saw to it that His prophets constituted such a class.

3. *The Hebrew prophets were men of distinct individuality.*

In them we find diversity of individuality in union with oneness of aim, and of faith, and of life. Run through their pages and you will ever see the same protest for truth and justice and mercy; the same messages of wrath for the oppressor the cruel and the impious; the same righteous care for the widow and the fatherless and the stranger. While they bore the same messages and preached the same principles and predicted the same grand coming events, still these messages and principles and predictions all received the stamp of their individuality, and worked among the people in beautiful diversity. They were like the same thrilling songs translated from the brain of the master composer into living tones by means

of the ringing cornet and the pealing organ and the sweet-voiced lute. The songs are one and are perfect; but they all bear and express the individuality of the instrument which makes them vocal. There is as much variety among the prophets of the Old Testament as there is among the apostles of the New Testament. The plaintive Thomas is matched by the plaintive Jeremiah. The lute nature of John is matched by the lute nature of Isaiah. The heroism and logic of Paul are matched by the heroism and logic of Elijah. The practical James is matched by the practical Micah. The traitor Judas finds his counterpart in the traitor Balaam.

So distinct is the individuality of the Hebrew prophets that they can be easily characterized and classified. We can deal with them and designate them by their leading traits, as historians have dealt with and have designated the great men of the world among the ancient nations. Æschylus is called the theologian of heathendom. Plato is called the prophet of heathendom. Epictetus is called the saint of heathendom. There is a classification of the Hebrew prophets as clear and as distinct as this classification of the heathen sages. Among the Hebrew prophets we have Samuel the organizer; Elijah the national reformer; Jonah the revivalist; Isaiah the theologian and nationalist; Jeremiah the individualist, the subjective preacher, the man who appeals

to the conscience; Hosea the analyst; Micah the practical utilitarian; Ezekiel the priestly ritualist; Daniel the apocalyptist; Haggai and Zechariah the reconstructionists.

But why set forth the individualism of these men? To show that temperament and natural constitution should never be considered a barrier to a religious life. In the Hebrew prophets all manner of temperaments were religious, and rendered effective service to God and His cause. To show that our individuality is a gift from God to give variety to the truth, which should always be embodied and incorporated in human life. When we spoil our individuality, and refuse to work for God along its line, we spoil one of God's plans; and in a degree we narrow divine truth and make it monotonous.

4. *The Hebrew prophets were men who had, back of their words, a fine type of character.*

Using italics, we would say, *they were men*. Their personality will bear the severest investigation. Their characters will stand the fiercest fires of the crucible. Some men of high professions are but bushels of chaff; they were bushels of wheat. Some men are but bundles of shavings; they were solid timber. They were men of advanced views concerning personal purity and dignity; and there was a striking and noted concordance between their views and their lives. They were honest men, and fearless men, and liberal

men, and self-denying men. Their personality shone with spiritual graces and holy traits. When duty required sternness, and when nothing else would do, they were stern. On such occasions not the priest, nor the king, nor the people had any terror for them. On such occasions they stood before the world in their solitary grandeur. But sternness was put on as a duty; it was not the habit of their life. The habit of their life was gentleness and loveliness and humility. The Hebrew prophet was the sweetest-spirited man in the whole kingdom. He was the man whom the people delighted to have near them, and to partake of their hospitality. This is what the Shunammite woman teaches us when she builds a chamber upon the wall for Elisha. When men possess and exert a tremendous power in the world and push the cause of God on to success, there is always an explanation of their power and success. The explanation of the power and success of the old Hebrew prophets was this: Back of their warnings and counsels and confession of faith was a royal and magnificent moral and spiritual personality. *They were men.* They were pure and lovable characters. They were self-abnegating and consecrated heroes, who put their lives and all their possessions into their creed.

There is a lesson just here, and there is a question just here. The lesson is this: For the furtherance of the cause of God, we must have men

as well as principles; we must have character as well as creed. The question is this: What is our personality doing for the cause of God? Is it attracting men or repelling men? There are multitudes of grand principles and creeds in the world, but they meet with little or no success, and the reason is this: They are not married to men, men of the Hebrew-prophet stamp. They are crippled and thrown into disrepute by the weak personality of their professed advocates. There is no use in talking, you cannot make even holy and heavenly principles effective without and apart from effective men. Men are to principles what the cannon is to the cannon ball. Men with no larger calibre than a toy pistol cannot hurl against the fortress of the foe principles which are the size of cannon balls. For the victory of the truth *we want men*; men with a large calibre of faith and a large calibre of liberality.

One of England's greatest statesmen was asked by a friend if he thought a certain measure would pass through the Parliament? His quick reply was: "It will not." His friend began to dispute his decision, and to forecast and to reason with him as to the righteousness of the cause. The statesman replied: "I acknowledge that the cause possesses all that you claim for it, and I believe that it ought to succeed; but nevertheless it will not, and the reason is, it has not the right kind of men as its advocates. They have not the charac-

ter and the consistency that hold the respect of their fellow-men." Brethren, principles are not everything; creed is not everything. Principles and creeds of the very best type are lying all around us, utterly powerless, because they are divorced from the right personality and the right character.

I know professed Christians who claim that their church has the creed of creeds. In religious matters they are as big-feeling and as self-important as old Diotrephes, who, in the days of the Apostle John, wanted to make all the slates for the Church. They are so stiff with orthodoxy that they are brittle. They are sectarian to the last atom of their orthodox body. They are not only in a rigid Church, but more than that, they are bitter partisans in the most rigid party of their rigid Church. Their constant cry is, "Stand by the principles of the Church." So heavily do their principles weigh upon their souls that they have grown stern and unattractive and severe. Now, what of these men? Well, I have seen them accept and tenaciously hold positions at the head of practical interests connected with their congregations, interests that were vital to their congregations, interests where the principles which they professed to believe could best be disseminated, and yet they allowed these interests to dwindle under their leadership into insignificance. But they could not help this. Yes, they could. Five

hundred dollars a year well expended would have put life into these schemes committed to them, and would have given character and power to their principles and to their congregations. But they did not have five hundred dollars to contribute, and it would have been a mortification for them to have handed these interests over to others who had. But they did have five hundred dollars which they could have contributed, they had tens of thousands upon tens of thousands stored away. You men with your tens of thousands and fifties of thousands accumulated, and banked, and stocked, and invested, you want to marry your thousands to your principles. You want to tell your souls that these thousands belong to God, and that they are just so much Church money. If you are large talkers and high professors of a high creed, then you must be large givers. Common honesty and common consistency require this. If from your accumulated thousands you give only hundreds during the year to the support of your boasted principles, your creed is too large for your moral and spiritual personality. You are nothing more than a toy pistol with a quarter of an inch calibre. Use your little calibre for firing paper wads of mere conjecture concerning truth, but attempt not to handle or hurl God's great cannon balls of principles, given from the armory of heaven for respectable guns. Toy pistols and cannon balls are a grotesque and an absurd mismatch.

Liberality is the test of a man's creed. The principles of God must have men to impel them before they can be effective. What the modern Church wants above all things to-day is a large enforcement of men. We have the principles of God formulated and expressed by the unerring Spirit of Inspiration, and glowing upon the pages of the holy word; what we need is a reproduction of men after the type of the old Hebrew prophets, who will and who can put a telling and magnificent personality back of God's principles.

Such are some of the characteristics of the old Hebrew prophets. They were, all of them, the major prophets and minor prophets, heroes of God. We should bless God for them, for they have not ceased to serve the world. By their writings they still live and still inspire humanity. We feel their faith, and their heroism, and their loyalty. They shame our timid treasons. They teach us how to be true witnesses. They put into our hands forged thunder bolts to hurl against the strongholds of sin and Satan. When we want to call sin by its right name, and to administer to it its merited rebuke, we are compelled to open their books and quote their words. Their characters stand before us, the embodiment of everything morally solid and praiseworthy. The prophet power is still a power in the world, and it will continue to be unto the end of time.

There are some practical points which we should

gather from this study. They are such as these:

1. A human life becomes great only as God is admitted into it.

The prophets were great: but the prophets were men of God. God and His rule in the universe were realities to them. Loyalty to God was their motto in life. They recognized the rights of God, and the crowning of God was their supreme purpose. The surrender of self to God was their daily exercise. They kept constantly saying to their souls, "We are the Lord's: and we are separated from the world." This separation unto God made them the exponents of the possibilities of God-fearing men. God was to their life what the vital sap is to the life of the tree. The tree when filled with vital sap is robed in leafy glory, and is crowned with desirable fruit; but when the vital current is taken out of it, it becomes black and barren and crumbles away. Put God into a man's life, and he becomes a Samuel, a Micah, a Jeremiah. Put God into a man's life, and he becomes a Paul, a Stephen, a Luther, a Calvin, a Knox. What men in history can compare with these men of God, or with their kindred in the different ages? God is knocking at the doors of your nature by His gospel and by His Spirit. Have you opened the doors of your nature to God? How much of your thinking does He control? What place has He in your plans? What proportion of your time does He control? What en-

thronement has His law in your heart? What proportion of your substance do you give Him? If others were writing of you, could they call you "a man of God"? If God spoke of you, could He speak of you as He spoke of the prophets and call you His servant? If we are not as the prophets, it is not God's fault. It is our fault; because we are keeping God out of our lives. We may if we will, says the Apostle Paul, be filled with all the fulness of God. If we were, our lives would be different.

2. We owe the truth a lovable personality.

Such a personality the prophets gave the truth. In them we find that a grand personality is the grandest of all possible things. There is nothing that can make the truth so powerful. The truth is like a perfect composition in music. Perfect as the piece of music is, everything depends upon the way the notes are lifted from the printed page and translated into sound, and upon the kind of instrument which is used in rendering it. Let it be rendered by a spluttering banjo, and it will sound more like a farce than a grand masterpiece. But let it float out into the stillness of the night from the soft flute, or let the solemn-toned organ breathe it into the atmosphere, and it thrills the soul and brings credit to the genius of the musical composer. Let the personality that corresponds with the lute and organ give the truth of God to the world. Only through it can the world

be moved by the truth and be led to appreciate the God of truth. Truth is like light. Light can be intensified and doubled in power by the right kind of a reflector. Even so the truth can be intensified by a proper reflector. A lovable personality is a proper reflector. A lovable personality is more powerful than any page of Scripture. It is the page of Scripture reflected. It is more powerful than the keenest and most logical and most eloquent sermon. You are familiar with the story of the minister's eloquent sermon, and the sexton's lovable and holy personality. You remember which was the more powerful for Christ. There was a man in the congregation at which the minister preached for six full months. He was a man of influence and a scholar: and the minister felt that to win him to Christ would be to win a great trophy for his Lord. He took up the salient features of the gospel and set these forth with all the logic and force he could command. At last the man yielded to Christ, and the minister felt amply repaid for his long persistent work. Curious to know how the man was reached and what sermon struck the mark, he asked the man to name the sermon. The reply which he received was this: "No sermon reached me. I was won by the sweet Christian disposition and life of the sexton. I felt that I would like to be one with him in disposition, and I accepted of his Christ, because I saw what his Christ did for him."

Give me lovable men to carry the truth of God to the world, large-paying men, open-handed men, the men of the heart, self-denying men, men who will attract and not repel—give me these, and you may have all the close-fisted, loud-talking, high-professing men.

But we need not go back to the Hebrew prophets to learn the value of a lovable personality, or to see that such a personality is requisite to give longevity and force to the thoughts of genius, or to give the man of genius himself a claim to greatness and respect. The disclosure which Mr. Froude has made of the private life of Thomas Carlyle demonstrates this. I have nothing to say of the propriety of these disclosures, *pro* or *con*, but I have this to say: These disclosures have shattered the image which the public generally had of the character of Carlyle. They have demonstrated that even the unregenerate world will discount a man whose private life is a farce and libel on humanity. Whether right or wrong in his exposures, Mr. Froude has struck the keynote of the nineteenth and twentieth century, viz. : that roundness of character, not merely intellectual attainments, not alone the energies that go to make up distinction, is the true test of a man's worth to the world, the sum and substance of true greatness. A great will, a great intellect, a great moral force turned outward upon mankind, and never inward upon self, is a travesty on true greatness. It is a

reproach to any man to preach morality and reform and advancement while the platform upon which he stands is mouldy and decayed with private spleen, inconsiderateness, unkindness, and uncharitableness in the smallest details of private life. The setting forth of the true personality of Thomas Carlyle by Froude has thinned Carlyle's audience and lessened his influence, because first of all the people demand and will have a noble personality in those whom they choose as leaders. Our times join with the times of the prophets in declaring that the crown of all things in this world is a loving and noble personality. This must be given if thought would live. This must be given to the truth if the truth would become mighty and would prevail.

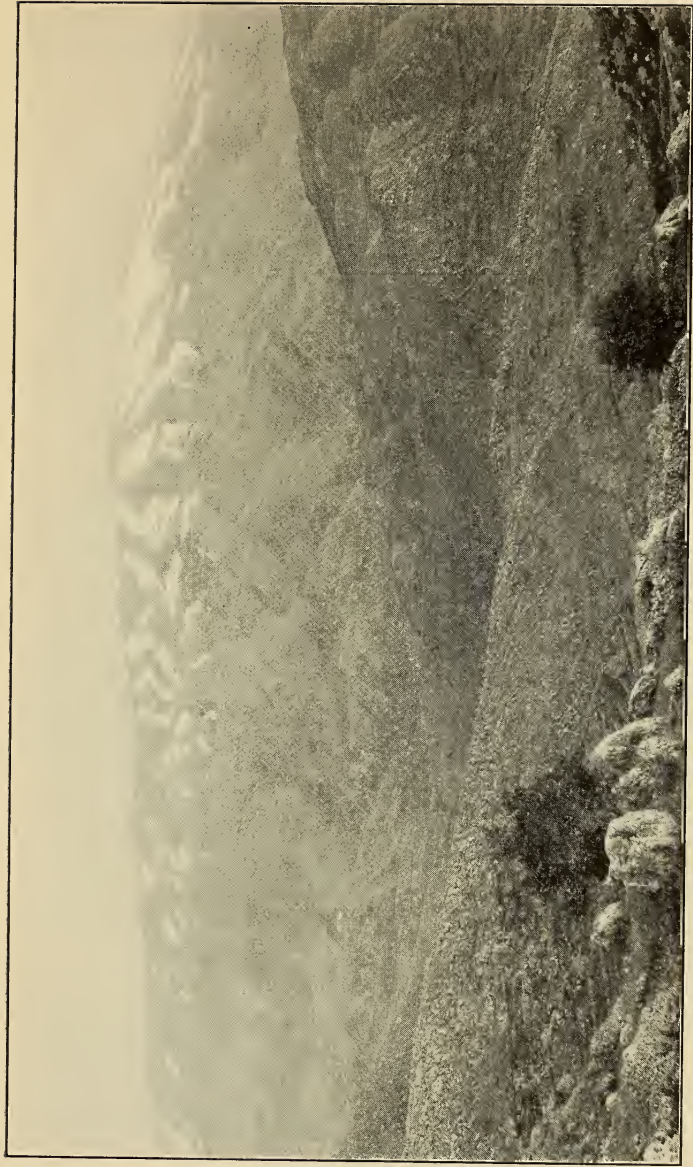
3. Let us remember that great is our responsibility because great are our privileges.

We have the words and the example of the prophets. They teach us what we may be. They teach us how to live. The man who lives in the school of the prophets owes the world a ripe Christian scholarship. He is under moral obligation to be prophet-like. But we have more than the prophets. We cannot think of the fact that God has spoken through them without recalling to memory the opening words of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us

by his Son!" We are the disciples of Jesus; and he that is least in His kingdom is greater than the greatest of all the prophets. He is living in greater times, he sees greater sights, he is within reach of greater possibilities.

We go into raptures over the times in which we live, and this is right: but let us remember that our greater times, which are crowded with greater privileges, are crowded also with greater responsibilities. The greatness of our responsibilities should lead us to great reliance upon Jesus Christ, who alone can prepare us for meeting our responsibilities.

THE SACRED HEIGHTS OF PALESTINE;
OR, THE USES OF THE MOUNTAINS.



MOUNT HERMON WITH ITS PERPETUAL SNOW.

XIII.

THE SACRED HEIGHTS OF PALESTINE; OR, THE USES OF THE MOUNTAINS.

“The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, saith the Lord who hath mercy on thee.”—ISA. liv. 10.

WE should dwell long enough in the midst of the mountains, with their white heights, and their rocky massiveness, and their unscalable altitudes, to learn that they play an indispensable part in the economy of life. They are forces of God perpetually working upon the lines of mercy. They are nature's bank vaults packed full of inestimable riches. They are the great reservoirs in which God stores His waters in the form of the crystal glacier. Out of them God pours forth those rivers of life which roll through the continents. The Amazon is the child of the Andes; the Rhine is the child of the Alps; the Mississippi is the child of the Rockies; the Nile is the child of Ruwenzori. Thus it is all through this broad earth: it is mountain, then glacier, then river, and then man with his civilization dwelling upon the banks of the river.

But all this is physical, and pertains to the physical use of the mountains. All this is simply physical geography. The mountains have a higher use than the physical. They are of use as view-points from which man may see and ponder and admire the beauties and sublimities and immensities of nature, and get the corresponding lessons. This use brings the mountains into the higher life of man. It makes them sublime problems in stone: gateways into the realms of thought—moral and æsthetic powers. Placing us right in the midst of the picturesqueness of nature, the mountains produce food for the intellect and for the heart. They show us fascinating and enchanting beauty, and then when they have put us under the spell of beauty they say to us, "O man, match this beauty of matter with beauty of mind and soul. God wants beautiful lives."

Beauty is part of the gospel of the world. God talks to us through beauty, as we all know. Beauty in nature is a distinct appeal to us over and above all utilities and economies. We know that every touch of beauty is for the human eye, and is a thought of God for us. There is not a point of gold on the insect's wing, nor a curve, nor a color in the leaf but is there for us to look at, that the higher life in us may be awakened, and that we may be made to love beautiful things, so that we may rise from the love of beautiful things to the love of beautiful ideas, and from the love of beau-

tiful ideas to the love of beautiful persons, and from the love of beautiful persons to the love of a beautiful self. The mountains have been called nature's symbols of personality, her word of decision, vigor, outlook, serenity, and self-respect.

What we say of the vision of beauty which the mountains bring us, we may say also of the vision of immensity which the mountains bring us. It is an influential thing to stand face to face with immensity, as one does when one looks out from a mountain summit. When we stand face to face with immensity we breathe deeply, we live broadly, we bound up and out, we aspire, we soar. The vision of immensity evokes the play of imagination. It drives trifles out of our thoughts and makes us long for the fellowship of the great. It lifts us out of our limitations and starts within us the throbbing of unreached possibilities. It acts as a revelation of self, and calls us to a life befitting self. It demands of the world of humanity mountain men with snow-white souls, and with characters towering toward the moral and spiritual altitudes of God. A mountain-top with its vision is where a man projects himself forward in life, and on in life, and up in life. It is the place where he makes large plans. In shaping our thoughts I ask you to consider two uses of the mountains of God.

1. The mountains are of use as pedestals for great historical facts.

Where shall we look for the illustration and confirmation of this point? Everywhere. Do we open the books of mythology? There it is. Yonder are the white heights of Olympus holding up to universal view the great deeds of Jupiter and the gods. Do we open the book of romance? There it is. There is William Tell on one of the spurs of Switzerland, and before him his own boy holding the target on his head. It was a shot for life which Tell made when his arrow struck the apple on his boy's head without deviating a hair's breadth from his aim. The story of William Tell has planted the seed of liberty in the heart of every boy in the Swiss republic. Do we open the biographies of our great men? There it is. In human biography the mountains are connected with the deepest thoughts and holiest ambitions of leading men. When they would wrestle with giant problems they betake themselves to the mountains, that the depths of their souls may be stirred by contact with the depths of great nature. Goethe studied in the heart of the Alps; and so did Madam de Staël; and so did thousands of others of the children of genius. Zoroaster, Moses, Mohammed, Christ—these all legislated from mountains. Do we open the book of religious history? We see the same thing, viz. : great facts on mountain pedestals. The Alps tell the tales of the Waldenses, the Highlands of Scotland tell the tales of the Covenanters, and the hills of New

England tell the tales of the Pilgrims and Puritans.

Thus by a general survey, we see that mountains are thrones in history upon which sceptred events sway the thoughts and hopes and destinies of men. The gods of mythology rule from Olympus, and the Muses from Parnassus. Rome rules from her seven hills, and Athens from her Acropolis, and Memphis from her Pyramids.

But it is not my intention to go through the pages of general history in order to illustrate my point; I purposely make the point in order that I may get into the Bible. How the holy mountains jut up in majesty and grandeur from the pages of the Book! As we see them in the Book they are eloquent historians. The Bible shows us that there was not a noted mountain in Palestine upon which God did not put some important event. He made every hill talk of something calculated to magnify Himself or His truth, or else call out love to Him, or else strengthen faith in Him, or else magnify and enforce duty. It would seem as though the mountains were made for the events to which they are married.

Take Sinai! It was just fitted for the giving of the law. Its summit was high enough to be wrapped around with the thick cloud which was Jehovah's chariot; and the plain before it was broad enough to hold the millions of Israel in such a way that they could see everything and hear

everything. And then there were peaks enough around, subordinate peaks, to catch and echo the thunder which pealed forth and which was intended to give majesty to the marvellous scene. Stop and in imagination follow just one thunder peal as it issues from Sinai! The one peal explodes right above the summit, and then the terrible roar runs out on lines in every direction. Some lines run through the valleys, and you hear a deep rumble; other lines strike the surrounding crests, and crag throws the voice to crag until the awful peal is echoed and repeated, duplicated and reduplicated, a thousand times with deafening and awing effect. So completely adapted was Mount Sinai as a theatre to the scene that was enacted upon it that I believe God away back in the creative era gave the subterranean forces which heaved the mountain into its snowy altitude definite instructions how to heave it, and how to shape it, and how to surround it. He told all the elements to work toward the day of the giving of the law. After the giving of the law, he told Sinai to stand just where it was to the end of time and proclaim to mankind what God had done on that wonderful day, and what God had spoken.

As God used Sinai so He used Calvary. The Cross of Jesus Christ must be seen to the ends of the earth, and this fact God symbolized by putting it upon a mountain height. I believe that the one great mission of Calvary was to hold up

the Cross of Jesus Christ, and become the divine altar upon which the great sacrifice for the sin of the world should be offered. When Jesus Christ completed His saving work there, God said to Calvary, Remain forever and hold in your solid rocks the yawning fissures made by the earthquake when Jesus Christ was crucified, and tell mankind how heaven and earth alike were stirred to their depth by the wonderful tragedy. My fellow-men, before you can annihilate the holy law of God, you must pulverize Sinai; before you can destroy the Cross of Christ you must uproot Calvary.

You see that the facts which God puts on the mountain pedestals are the very facts which man needs to know. They are such things as these, the Law and the Gospel. Because of this use which God makes of mountains, there are some mountains standing on earth that seem almost conscious beings, and their presence affects us like a living personality. If they could but speak and tell what they have seen and felt, they would fill the listener with awe, and they would inspire him with faith. By the laws of association they do speak. They rise before us as perpetual sacraments of hope. They proclaim God's interest in human life, and declare that He who has done great things for man in the past will do great things for man in the future. He will put other facts on other mountain pedestals until every mountain summit of the universe shall become a

historic memorial shaft and a witness to the over-rule of God.

As you turn the pages of God's Book, I would have you notice the fulness of human history, and especially the fulness of human history in the line of the covenant of redemption, as that history is read from the mountain tops of Scripture.

You can decipher the story of the deluge from the sides of the rainbowed Ararat; and the story of the exodus and the organization of Israel into a nation from the sides of Sinai; and the story of the great reformation from the sides of Carmel, and thus on. But we must enter the biography of Christ if we would see how complete mountain-top history is. There is a mountain-top gospel, and a mountain-top biography of Christ. Take five mountains that jut up in Christ's experience. The mountain of Temptation, and Hattin from which He delivered the Sermon on the Mount; and Hermon, and Calvary, and Olivet. These set forth the man Christ Jesus: His immaculate holiness which is proof against all the wiles of the Evil One; His sublime principles and golden beatitudes; His inherent and divine glory, which flashes through His body as through a crystal and transfigures Him and shows Him to be the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His Person; His atoning sacrifice for sin on the cross; and His ascension to heaven to rule in majesty at the right hand of the throne for His people.

Weave these great five facts together and you have the biography of Jesus Christ in all of its grand essentials. There is a fifth gospel, a gospel in addition to the four which you have in the New Testament, and that fifth gospel is the gospel according to the sacred mountains. My fellow-men, before you can obliterate the story of Jesus Christ from this earth in which He so sublimely lived, you will have to grind out of sight and forever erase from Palestine the sacred mountains where He was tempted, and where He preached His wonderful sermon and where He was transfigured, and where He died and where He ascended.

There is one other thought which I wish to exalt before our minds in speaking of the mountains of Palestine which hold up great historical facts. It is a practical thought. It is this: These mountains which are in the Bible should be within us; they are mountains which should be in our lives. We never can become mountain men until they are in us and in our lives. There should be a Calvary within us for the crucifixion of self: "for they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof." Carmel stands for reform, Moriah for sacrifice, Pisgah for vision, Zion for worship, Hermon for transfiguration, Hattin for truth, Olivet for the gate of heaven. Now these are the very things which we need in life—reformation, sacrifice, truth, transfiguration, nearness to heaven. What moun-

tains have you in your life? The mountains which Moses had? which Elijah had? which Christ had? Have you been reformed; have you been transfigured; have you been crucified? To all these heights of duty and privilege the mountains of God are calling you this day. They are preaching to you in God's name by means of and through the great historical facts which they lift up—facts which stand for human duty, human possibility, human aspiration, and human achievement. They bid you live away up in the heights of your own being; that is, to live in a constant transfiguration: for every height of your soul is a mountain of transfiguration—a snowy Hermon, where prayer and communion with the divine Father cause the outflashing of all that is best within man. I have reached my second point, it is this:

2. The mountains are of use as symbols opening up to us and illustrating high and right conceptions of God.

This is by far the grandest use of mountains. They are Bibles of stone, and as such they give us God and God's thoughts. God is the great need of man, and that which brings God to man and helps toward a perfect fellowship between God and man renders man the finest and most effective service. God brought into a man's life makes man, redeems man, transforms man into the divine image, and glorifies his entire being. Seeing that the mountains are an alphabet designed

to spell out and describe God to our souls, let us see if we cannot get some truths about God from and through the mountains.

To do this we must call to our help the divine writers. It will be much for us to do if we do nothing more than think over after them their great thoughts. Many of them use the mountains as symbols of God. They see in them pictures of the very attributes of God.

For example, looking up at their massive and unchangeable forms the psalmist says, "They are symbols of God's righteousness. "Thy righteousness is like the great mountains: thy judgments are a great deep: O Lord, thou preservest man and beast." Such is the vision of David when he expects God to defend him from evil and befriend the right. He casts himself upon the righteousness of God, and makes his appeal to it. And as he does so the righteousness of God towers before his faith as firm and as massive and as reliable as the mountains, "Thy righteousness is like the great mountains." We poor sinful creatures naturally shrink from the thought of righteousness: but after all it is a grand thing that there is such a thing as the righteousness of God, and that the mountains are not more steadfast than it is. This righteousness is ours, and is on our side, and is our defence. What would this world of ours do if it were not for the righteousness of our God? Tyranny would grind it under its iron heel; op-

pression and wrong would rob it and enslave it, and all manner of cruel crime would deluge it with blood. There is nothing that I more wish to see march up and down and through this earth of ours than God's righteousness. It means the overthrow of iniquity; it means the defence of human rights irrespective of race or color; it means civil and religious liberty. Evil might as well clash against the embedded granite of the mountain as clash with the righteousness of God. God's righteousness forever blocks the way of all evil.

For example, the prophet Isaiah uses the mountains as steps upon which he may climb into a firm faith in God's power. To him they shadow the attribute of God's omnipotence. They are the embodiment of power. It took power to put them where they are, and by the power of their might they hold their places against all opposing forces. The storms which sweep our earth in majesty are vivid forms of power, and they terrify us; but the storms split themselves into a thousand harmless parts every time they strike the corners of the immovable mountains. The prophet is constantly throwing himself back upon the power of his God. He solves all perplexing problems in Israel by the power of God. And the mountains which God weighs in His scales, he tells us are measures by which we may begin to form conceptions of God's omnipotence. To him Lebanon says, "The power of God is infinite." He tells

men everywhere: "God is our refuge and strength, a present help in every time of trouble." God stands round about His people as the mountains stand round about Jerusalem.

Thus we see from the way the divine writers speak of the mountains that nature not only witnesseth to the existence of God, but in some respect also it witnesseth to the character of God. Its striking features are similitudes of God's majesty and glory and power. It is as Paul teaches, "We learn of the invisible things of God by the things which God has made."

But our text teaches us a fact in advance of anything we have yet reached. It teaches us that God Himself interprets the mountains, and that He makes them symbolize the greatest of all known facts, viz.: His infinite and unchangeable love toward the children of men. He says to us: "The mountains have been in all ages, and are to you to-day the symbols of eternity, they are as near to eternal existence as anything nature has: but my love is more eternal. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from you saith the Lord who hath mercy upon you."

This is wonderful. This makes nature talk to us of divine love. And what is strange, this old message of God, written in the old book of prophecy in the Old Testament, is the very latest message which science is bringing to man and prov-

ing with elaborate arguments. Science to-day is making the earth ring with this cry, "God is love." It points us to beauty as it is everywhere in nature and says, "That is love, and a witness of love." A world that is lovely can only proceed out of a will that loves. Now the will that works in nature always guides its labors into paths which make for final loveliness. Why is beauty shot into the dead and crumpling leaf of the autumn tree? Because God is love. Why is the scarred peak of the thunder-riven mountain lichened with infinite skill until its far-away altitudes gleam like battlements of gold? Because God is love. Why is it that the vast depths of the dome overhead are tinted with tender azure and not with appalling black? Because God is love. Why is it that the appalling storms break into rainbows which display the whole gamut of color? Because God is love.

Science points not only to the presence of beauty in nature as a proof of God's love; it points us to the marvellous way in which nature provides us with food and says, "Here again, O man, is the love of God." Take, for example, honey, which may be called the climax of food. The bees that make the honey work among hundreds of strange substances. Thousands of bees work, and they meet thousands of poisonous plants, but not a single bee is deceived, and in perfect confidence we eat the fruit of their labor, involving millions of selections; and yet we know that if one bee

made a mistake our life would pay the penalty. If we can trust the instinct of the bee, ought we not to be able to trust the God who gave it its unerring instinct? The bee has yet to make the first mistake and gather poison into the cell instead of honey. The very bee with its pure delicious honey teaches that God is love and that God is wisdom, and that His love and wisdom are such that they can be counted upon, for God changeth not.

All this is on the surface. Nature has deeps, and science to-day is searching into the deeps of nature and bringing up the proof from these that God is love, and that everything in nature culminates in love—in God's love to man.

In the latest book of science which I have read, there is a chapter which is called the "Evolution of Motherhood." The chapter is wonderful for its genius. It says human motherhood stands at the head of all motherhood, and at the head of creation also; it is the last of God's creative works. When God made Eve He went no further in the evolution of things. Everything below led up to Eve. There is a growth of motherhood down in the regions below the human. There is a motherhood down there that knows nothing about its children; it dies before its children begin to live. The butterfly deposits its larvæ on the leaf of the tree, but before its offspring in the larvæ become caterpillars, and then butterflies, the but-

terfly which deposited the larvæ has long been dead. There is in nature a marked and distinct grade from the butterfly motherhood up to human motherhood, which lives with and loves its children. When God brought the human mother into existence He quit evolving. He said: "I have given the world motherhood, and in motherhood I have given the world love in the highest possible human form, and that is enough. Let love take up the task of progress, and build up humane institutions, and fill the earth with tender and upbuilding associations, which will make a heaven out of earth."

But what is the chief teaching of our text? This. The character of God's love to man. And what is the character of God's love to man? It is unchangeable and eternal. It is a love that outlives the mountains. A love as long-lived as the mountains would be a very satisfactory love, but not satisfactory enough to suit God. The mountains stand for geological ages, and geological ages are long, long ages. But geological ages, long as they are, and symbols of eternity as they are, are not long enough for the cravings and the plans of God's love as He deals with His people. An English theologian writes: "We should read these words, 'The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed!' with the tone of scornful disbelief. It is an impossibility for mountains to depart. So is a change in God's love impossible." That is

the truth about God's love, but it is not the truth about the mountains. The mountains shall depart. The mountains *are* changing. Let us be scientifically correct. Scientific correctness only magnifies the love of God. Glaciers starting from the snow heights are grinding down the mountain summits and pulverizing them. The actions of heat and cold and water are splitting and disintegrating the rocks up in the cold altitudes. Many a mountain is only a skeleton of what it was when it was first heaved from the bosom of the earth. The Alleghanies were once three thousand feet higher than they are to-day. There are spots where the falling débris of the mountain keeps us up an almost continual cannonade. There are tons and tons of rock dust being carried down to the plains by the rivers issuing from the mountains. There are constant avalanches which embody land-slides and giant boulders and these are hurled into the valleys. There is a ruinous crumbling going on all the time. There is not a mountain on this earth but God has inscribed upon it "Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return." But this crumbling is infinitesimal. It will take ages upon ages to level the great heights. Oh, yes. That is the point: for God says, "When these ages upon ages have come and gone, and when they have done their work, and when there shall be no more mountains, my love will be still wearing the dew of its youth and will only be

seeing the sunrise of its day." "The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, said the Lord who hath mercy upon thee." Brethren, this is the meaning of that monosyllabic description of God which the Apostle John gives us when he says: "God is love." He is love that never changes.

Do I believe this teaching? I do. Why? I believe it because John believed it. But John was carried away by a young enthusiasm when he uttered it. No, he was not. And that is the beauty of it. It was an old enthusiasm that spoke in John, and not a young enthusiasm. It was a tried enthusiasm. When John penned those words he was an old man. If you wish to know what John went through, read the Apocalypse. That lets you into his life. His life was a life of pain and struggle; filled with visions of dark desolations, of angels who smite with swords, of phials of wrath that pour out plagues of thunders and lightnings. His life was tapering to a close, widowed of all its old familiar friends. He had felt the fury of kings, looked into the face of the mad mob, swooned at the terrors predicted. He had known all that could crush, and sting, and dishearten, and deaden, and dismay; and yet at the close of this prolonged experience of life he pronounces with a sure heart and an invincible confidence as the sum of all his learning this: "God is love." Let any man be

able to speak out of a life such as that, and from such an experience bear testimony to the unchangeableness of God's love, and I am bound to believe him.

Do I believe the teaching of the text? I do. Why? Because wherever I see love in its pure form I find that from its very nature it is unchangeable. Look at it in the human sphere. Years ago a wealthy gentleman in England engaged himself to a woman of fine position and of large natural gifts. He left for California. While there fortune favored him until he fairly rolled in wealth. But stay! The wheel of fortune one day turned the wrong way, and he found himself a beggar. The man, most noble in his love, sent back by the next mail a few lines to his fiancée releasing her from her engagement. He would not have her marry a beggar. He had wooed and won her as a man of fortune, and he now sent back her release. Some months previous to this he had sent her a nugget of gold, which he himself had dug from the earth. When she received her release she took that nugget of gold and had it changed into a circlet, a ring. This ring she sent to him on the first outward-bound ship. It was her answer. Engraved in the inner margin of the ring was this inscription "*Ruth i. 16, 17.*" Opening his Bible at Ruth i. 16, 17, he read her message: "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou

goest I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me and more also if aught but death part thee and me." That was human love, yet it was unchangeable. I believe that if human love at its best is unchangeable, divine love must be infinitely unchangeable: and it is.

Do I believe in the teaching of the text? I do. Why? Because it is love's only self-protection to be true and unchangeable. It is the only way love can be happy. Every time love becomes fickle and proves unfaithful to its object, it suffers for its fickleness and unfaithfulness tenfold more than the object against which it sins. Now it does not stand to reason that love, especially the love of God, is going to inflict upon itself a grievous injury. Last month a young man was arrested for some trivial offence in the city of New York, and convicted and sent to the island. He sent a plea to his father to come to his rescue. But the father turned a deaf ear to the entreaty of his son. In his anger he determined to let him take care of himself and learn through humiliation that the way of the transgressor is hard. The father's pride had been injured, and pride buried his love. When the son reached the Island and found what a filthy place it was, he made a second appeal to his father; tell-

ing him that he would not allow his dog to be put in such a place. The father was still deaf to his son's appeal saying "he has made his bed and he must sleep in it." Forsaken by the one man on all the earth who should have befriended him, that boy made a desperate effort to escape. But he utterly failed, he was not a skillful enough swimmer: and the next morning his body was washed lifeless upon the shore of the Island. But what of the father who was untrue to his love? The last I heard of him, he was on the verge of insanity crazed with grief and suffering from a broken heart. The one cry that is on his lips to-day is this, "I would give the world if I had gone to my poor boy." God is not going to wound His own love: God is not going to break His own heart by going back upon His covenant ones. His love will always remain unchangeable, because it must be true to itself. God's own happiness requires an unchangeable love upon His part. There is no bond to trueness stronger than that.

Do I believe in the teaching of the text? I do. Why? Because of what God's love had already done. It has given His Son. It has built Calvary. It has overlooked the wicked treatment it has received from man in the past. It can never be treated by man worse than it has been treated. Men can do nothing more wicked than crucify Jesus Christ. Yet notwithstanding the crime of the crucifixion, God continues to love.

When I wish to thrill my soul with a picture of God's unchangeable love I open the book and read the parable of the prodigal son. That is a picture of God's love. The unchangeable love of the Father is the pith of that whole parable. Is there nothing that can change the father's love? Put the question to the parable and see. The son makes a decided fool of himself, and that is pretty bad: but still the father loves. He spends his patrimony on harlots. That is awful: but still the father loves. He expatriates himself and casts in his lot among swine and serves an uncircumcised gentile and feeds gentile swine, and makes himself loathed and abominable to the heart of every true Jew. That is awfulness added to awfulness: still the father loves. He goes down, down, down in the scale of crime and ingratitude and disgrace until he touches the bottom of all that is mean and sensual and devilish: but still the father loves. When the father sees him a wreck of what he once was wending his way home, he cries out so that all the neighborhood hears him: "My boy shall have the kiss, and the embrace of welcome, and the best robe, and the ring, and the fatted calf, and the feast, and the old recognition of sonship in the community." That parable is only a drama in words.

There is a drama in real life which sets forth the infinitude and eternity and the unchangeableness of God's love. This drama of life is

the story of the Christ, God's unspeakable gift. In that Christ-drama God does more than act the part of the father in the prodigal son. "In the parable the father waits until the son returns; but in Jesus Christ the divine Father can not wait for the son's return, but in Christ He goes after him into the far country and brings him back. Was not that the way it was with you? Did you seek God, or did God seek you? And when He found you, did He give you up on the first refusal, or upon the second, or upon the third? You resisted, He persevered. It was with you as it was with the Scotchman who said, "It took two to convert me." When asked what he did, he said: "I did everything I could against my conversion, and God Almighty did the rest." The rest was everything. Because God has done so much for us already, I believe with Paul that He who hath begun the good work of salvation in us will perfect it unto the day of Jesus Christ. That is, until we shall see Christ and shall be transformed by the sight into His glorious likeness.

I have only one word in closing, and it is this: This fact which God makes the mountains teach us, His unchangeable love, is just the fact to set before our souls as we work with God for the salvation of men. It is also just the view of God to present before men. You never will have atheism driven out of the world until you present to the

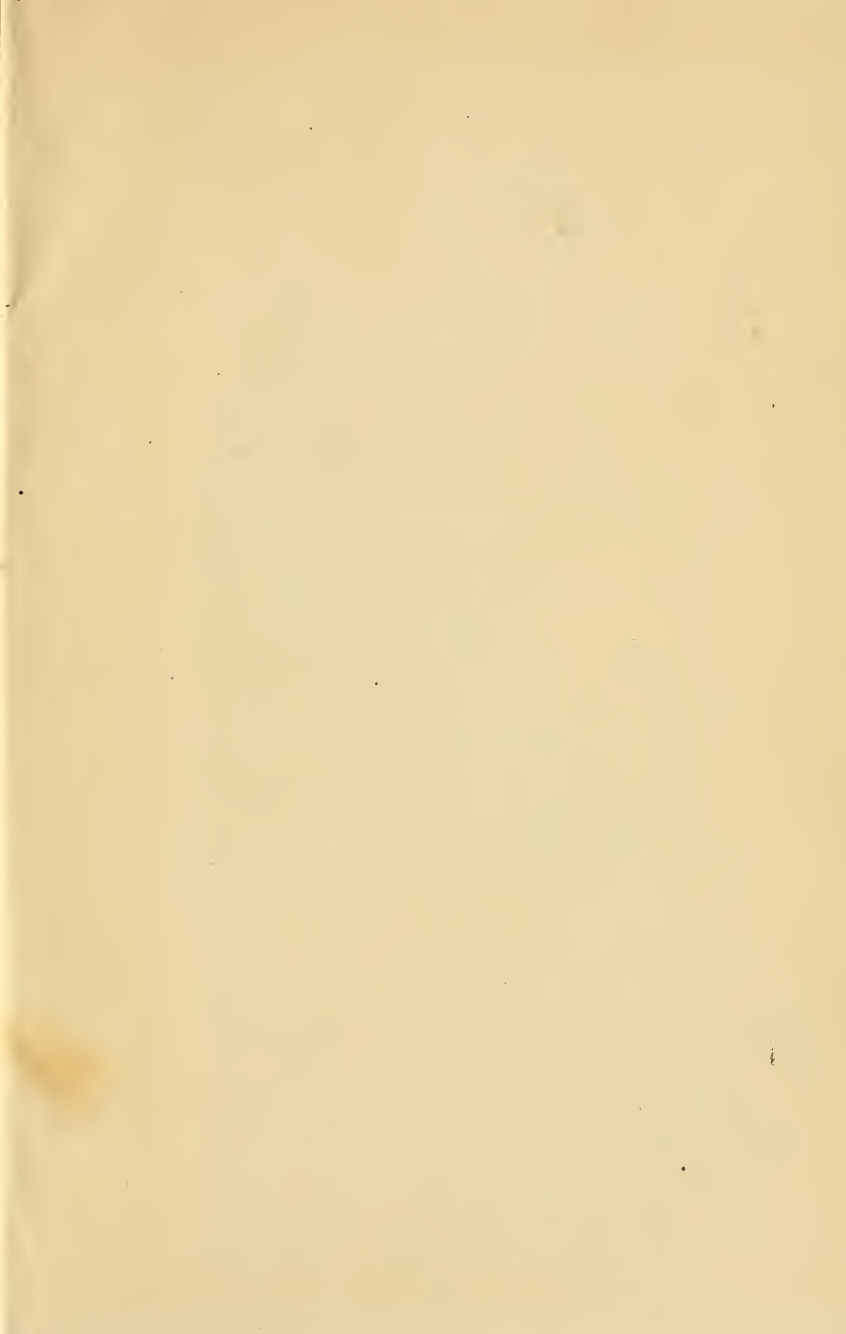
world such a God as men will want to have live and reign.

The God of love is such a God. Then also, this is just the God who stimulates workers among the lost and rebellious. If God be a God who continues to love, then we shall not fail in our work on God's part. If God had not loved Israel, and if He had not kept on loving Israel, Israel would never have reached the land of promise. Why even Moses gave Israel up. But he took up his work anew when he found that God refused to give them up. God's love said: "To Canaan I have started My covenant people, and to Canaan they shall go." Why, such is God's love that it saves away beyond our faith. There was not a man in all the spirit-filled Christian Church of the early apostolic class that believed Saul of Tarsus could be saved. There was not one with faith sufficient to pray for his conversion. God found him, and God was the only one who had faith to go after him. When he was converted the Church did not believe it, and Barnabas the son of consolation was the only man in all Jerusalem who was bold enough to step forward and give him the right hand of fellowship.

Oh, the inspiration that comes from the unchanging love of God! It enables us to say with enthusiasm: "I will work for the salvation of sinners, because God wants sinners saved, and because God loves sinners." In Christian work our hope

is in God. God loves the lost, therefore we labor in God's name and in God's power to save the lost. God cares for the lost, therefore we care for the lost. Inspired by the love of God! That is our equipment.

DEC 2 1899



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 021 066 379 4